Nation

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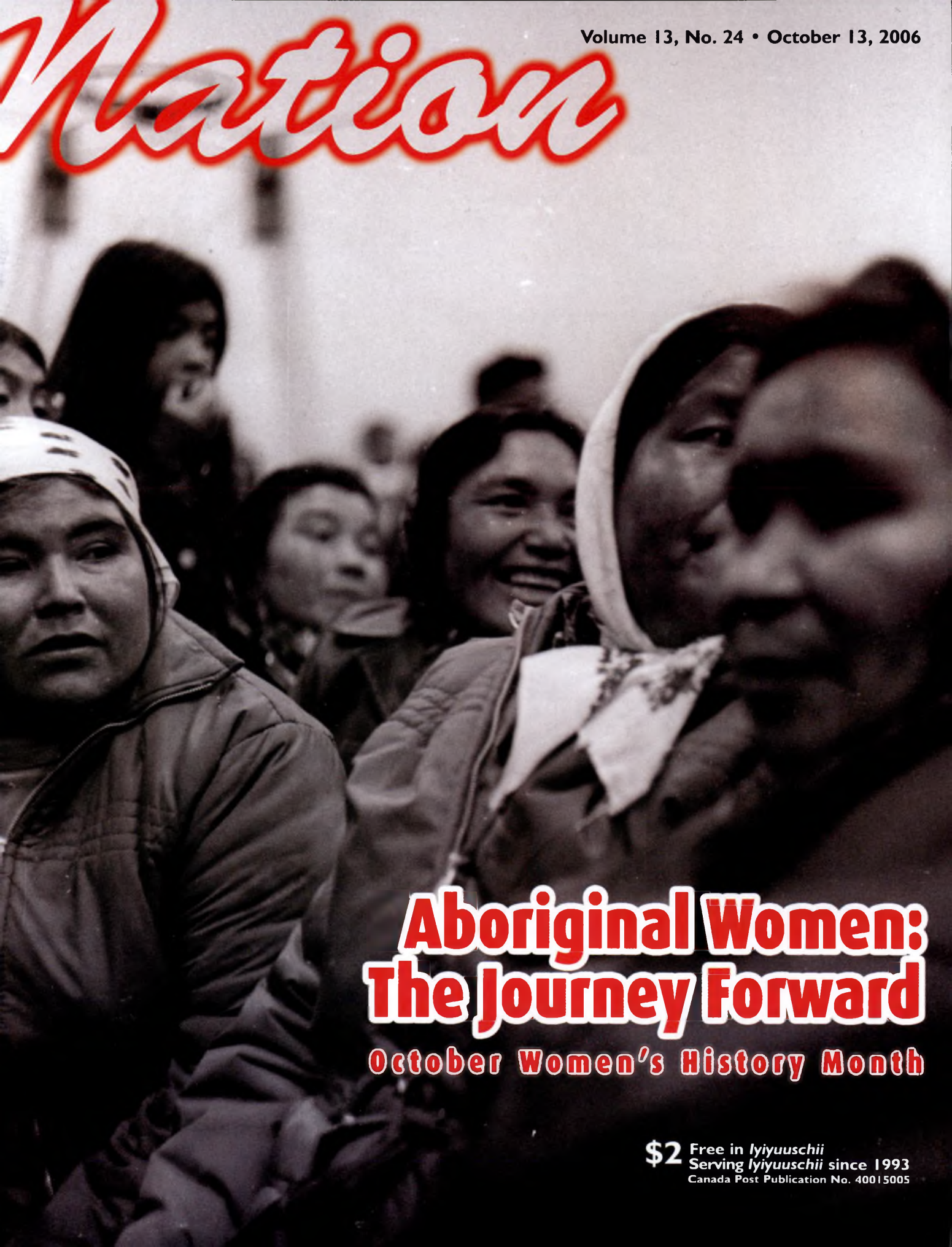

# Aboriginal Women: The Journey Forward

## October Women's History Month

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**Who? All Eeyouch**
**Where? Mistissini**
**When? November 28,29,30 - 2006**
**Why? Diabetes is #1 Health Challenge in Eeyou Istchee.**

Conseil Cri de la santé et des services sociaux de la Baie James
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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

**The whole Cree Nation needs to work together to prevent diabetes.**

**Interested in participating? Please contact:**
**Ms. Kitty Blacksmith at 418-923-3461 ext. 205**

**www.creediabetes.com/conference**

editorial

# Our mother's en-dashweems

by Andy Baribeau

*Note: This letter was read to those in attendance of the official opening of the Mary Ann Centre September 26, 2006.*

Our mother, Mary Ann Baribeau-Rabbitskin, passed away in October 2004, leaving behind a life filled with service to others, especially children. From my youngest days I can't recall our home not also being the home of other children. Yet, though it seemed we often shared our mother with others, I cannot say that she gave us less love and teaching. She always made an effort to give love and to teach respect and values to all children who came into her life, especially her four sons.

In the late 1980s and early 90s, the Mistissini Native Women's Association started up a daycare program and my mother joined that team of dedicated women who wanted to better the lives of mothers and their children. I remember her going into the Early Childhood Care program and working so hard to graduate, which she did. You know, she was the first member of our family to earn a college degree.

From then on, the daycare and the children she worked with were her passion. She called them "en-dwasheems," or "my children." And her co-workers became a family that she loved so much.

We had to contribute to helping her with her children. We would have to "steal" extra catalogues from the post-office for her to cut out pictures, or if we came by when she was preparing work for her children, we would have to sit down and help her cut out or paste things or whatever she was up to. She asked us to do many other things for her and her work and we were happy to help when we could because we knew how much she loved the daycare.

For her, the daycare was not a job, but a responsibility, just as a mother is responsible for her own children and her home. She would get excited about new projects, such as a new building or the renovation of another. And as any mother, she would worry needlessly and wonder if she should speak because people may not listen to her.

Throughout the years, no matter how excited she got about projects, it was always the children who were the focus of her attention. And as with any loving mother, she would take much pride in the achievements of those in her family and would grieve much if one of them was in pain.

Our mother did not much like speaking in public. She liked doing things. It is hard to find a picture of her sitting still. We have too many pictures of her in the background. She loved giving a hand and didn't like us making a big deal of her contribution.

The last time she came home, I had to drive her to the clinic. When we came home, I offered her to drive around. She didn't much feel like it because she was in pain so I just drove drove by the new daycare that was being built in front of the Elders' home. She looked at it and asked what the building was and I told her it was the new daycare. She smiled and said, "It's going to be nice, isn't it?"

Her family and friends from Awash Daycare know how much Mary-Ann loved them, her work and especially her children. This is why they chose to honour her by naming this new centre after her. If we could see her now, I am sure that she would say that if she loved her daycare family so much it is because they loved her and helped her out in so many ways. This is very true.

To me, the name Mary-Ann Centre also honours all the women who worked so hard to build the Awash Daycare and to help make this community a better place. If my mother gave so much to the Awash Daycare, it is because the Awash Daycare gave so much back in return.

My mother was one of many who loved and continues to love their work and their mission to help the children of today become the leaders of tomorrow.

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**on the cover**

**Photo: Pierre Lemay**

**Design: Alexandre Costa**

rez notes

# Women's work

When I was a kid, women were some kind of superheroes to me. It was nothing to see a little old lady slash her way through the bushes to set a snare, or topple an ice-age old tree into cords of wood, ready to be snowshoed out and ferried across the Fort George River.

I remember one day, when one of my mother's cousins was getting wood across the river, she brought her prize Ski-doo to haul back the tons of logs back to the island. We were quickly dispatched to fell some trees and we, being kids and all, managed to fell a tree each. Meanwhile, back at mom's cousin's side, the trees were felled rapidly and a hard snow-packed trail showed evidence of her toil. We dragged our poorly prepared logs to the river and were amazed that the sled was packed full and she was already to head back. "Get some more wood!" she called, as she quickly lit her cigarette and throttled off across the river.

The dog team was an essential tool for transportation and everyone ran behind the sleds, either for short hops to fetch wood and water or for long haul to another community. The women ran just as easily behind the sled as the men and contributed greatly with all the strenuous work required to stay alive in those days. Many people are amazed today at what people could accomplish in those days and the stories that came out showcasing incredible feats of strength and endurance, something we seem to hear less and less of these days.

Laundry day was a major event, and anyone with arms and legs would carry water endlessly from the banks of the river. This was hard work, wringing and hanging out to dry the last month's clothes. Days upon days of constant wood chopping, water hauling, laundry, cleaning, hunting, fishing, trapping and running made for some excellent healthy people and the women, as always, took everything in stride and quickly dispensed with their help whenever they could. Work was work in those days.

One day, a thunderous noise erupted from my grandmother's house, and we all ran over to see with awe, a gas-operated washing machine, wringer and all. The only thing you had to do was to carry the water and hang the clothes! The only other problem with the machine was that it had the tendency not to be able to differentiate between fingers and clothes, squeezing each equally hard enough to draw out all liquids. Luckily, my googum lived near the hospital and didn't have much to worry about.

The television converted many people to couch potato-ism and so has the convenience of electricity and running water. With all the convenience over the years, I've noticed the evolution of our bodies, changing from a sleek, well-oiled working and running body into a poutine-ladled smorgasborg of medical mysteries with a multi-million-dollar-a year-care package.

I say, give me back the days when the machine was just a machine and not a dependency, so that all people would gain back the health of the past. Perhaps, this may be a selfish plea, all women would turn their backs to the issue of hard working days again, but hey, we were healthy, weren't we?

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Canada

# Three communities to vote on EM 1-A

## *Nemaska, Waskaganish, Chisasibi look to halt Rupert diversion*

by Steve Bonspiel

The chiefs of the three communities that will be most affected by the EM1-A project are making an 11th hour stand against the diversion of the Rupert River.

Waskaganish, Chisasibi and Nemaska adopted mandates recently to hold referenda by November 1 to give their community members a chance to accept or reject the hydroelectric project.

"Hydro-Québec never got the consent of Waskaganish on the Rupert diversion," said Waskaganish Chief Robert Weistche. "And we never voted on that question specifically. So we like to be able to give the opportunity to our members to vote on that."

Weistche said that his people aren't looking to quash the 2002 Paix des Braves, rather he wants an open dialogue with Quebec and Hydro so his community can have their opinion heard.

"When we accepted the Paix des Braves, we accepted everything. We're telling the people that we're not going against the Paix des Braves, we're not telling people it's a bad deal.

"There's so much money involved in this," he continued. "There's already billions and billions of dollars and many jobs involved. There are many deals that have gone on too, but at the same time people we were led to believe that they weren't agreeing on the diversion, that's what we were told by lawyers. But now when we meet, all the lawyers say, 'Well you agreed already, you gave your consent, it's going ahead.'"

Weistche said that that it wasn't the band council who called for the referendum, it was trappers who would be most affected who asked for it.

"This is cultural genocide on First Nations people and the governments are aware of that. Why do we have such high rates of social problems like drugs and drinking? The suicide rate went up after the project went through in Chisasibi, and we're going to be subject to the same thing later on down the road," he said.

He clarified that he did not want to let an opportunity of hearing the people's voice slip by. "There should be a clear question posed to the people," said Weistche. "I don't want people coming to me 30 or 40 years from now and saying 'well you were there and you didn't even ask them the question.'"

**"This is cultural genocide on First Nations people and the governments are aware of that. Why do we have such high rates of social problems like drugs and drinking?**

**"Can Hydro put a price on this way of life? The very source of who you are as a Native person? No"**

Chisasibi Chief Abraham Rupert agrees. He wants to give his people the chance to speak up and have their voices heard.

"Whether this [the referendum] stops it or not, I'm hoping this will bring the government and Hydro to sit down with the Cree Nation again," said Rupert.

Rupert, along with his council, passed a unanimous resolution on October 3 to hold a November 1 referendum.

"Remember how we fought Great Whale, and what the Cree Nation did to save that river? Well we didn't get a chance to do that this time around and I don't think that's right," said Rupert.

Rupert told *the Nation* about the social problems that plague the community and the effects Chisasibi is still feeling today from the La Grande project built in the 1970s.

"When you uproot people from their birthplace, from where they used to gather, from where they raised their family and tell them they have to move because the land is going to wash away and erode; you're bound to have something happen inside that person," said Rupert, referring to the high suicide rate in Chisasibi and the rest of the Cree Nation.

"Can Hydro put a price on this way of life? The very source of who you are as a Native person? No. There is no price that they can put on that," said Rupert, who added that the original scars from the JBNQA have still not been dealt with.

"My people have gone through a lot. Our community is downstream from a large body of water. That's the anxiety that people carry here," said Rupert, who added that there would be a great sense of relief if the EM 1-A project can be halted. He also added that a lot of vegetation still hasn't had a chance to rebound from the original dam.

"The rivers, the land; the reality is that's part of who we are. They cannot separate the land from the Cree, that is who we are."

Hydro Québec spokesman Sylvain Theberge was reached by phone, but would not comment.

## INVITATION TO CREE BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

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# BUSINESS EXCHANGE DAY

Cree Nation / Abitibi-Témiscamingue

**November 30, 2006**
**at the Hotel Forestel, Val-d'Or**

It is with pleasure that the Secretariat in collaboration with the ComaxAT invite you to participate in the Cree Nation /Abitibi-Temiscamingue Business Exchange Day to be held at the Hôtel Forestel in Val-d'Or on November 30, 2006.

Last year, the event was a tremendous success and we expect approximately 200 participants this year. This activity is a great opportunity to meet with the Abitibi-Temiscamingue business people on a fixed rendez-vous basis to exchange information on products and services.

Special guests speakers will be Dr. Ted Moses, President of Petronor and a representative from S.E.B.J. (to be determined).

We hope that you will register your company and submit the names of your participants to us as soon as possible. You will then receive the list of the Abitibi-Temiscamingue businesses registered for this occasion so that we may schedule your rendez-vous according to your expectations.

TO REGISTER OR FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Secretariat to the Cree Nation
Abitibi-Témiscamingue Economic Alliance
624, 3rd Avenue, Val-d'Or (Quebec) J9P 1S5
Tel: (819) 824-9888 Fax: (819) 824-9588
E-mail: berlinghoff.lana@cablevision.qc.ca
Internet: creenation-at.com

## Healthy Living

**Nourish the body and stimulate the senses with Healthy Living recipes!**

Many people in Eeyou Istchee have Diabetes, or know of someone who does. Quite often this can be someone they love. We know that healthier food choices are important, but let's face it, sometimes they can border on boring. Well, not anymore! Each month *the Nation* will feature a delicious meal that keeps in mind the importance of health maintenance but does not forget rich and hearty satisfaction.

## Chocolate Cake

### Ingredients:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6 Tbsp | reduced-calorie stick margarine | 90ml |
| 1/4 cup | unsweetened cocoa powder | 50ml |
| 1/2 tsp | chocolate extract | 2ml |
| 1 cup+2 Tbsp | all-purpose flour | 280ml |
| 2 tsp | baking powder | 10ml |
| 1 tsp | baking soda | 5ml |
| 1/4 tsp | salt | 1ml |
| 1/4 cup+2 tbsp | granulated sugar | 80ml |
| 12 pkts or 4 tsp bulk | Sweet'n Low granulated sugar substitute, divided | 20ml |
| 1/4 cup | liquid egg substitute | 50ml |
| 2 tsp | vanilla extract | 10ml |
| 1 tsp | grated orange peel | 5ml |
| 1/2 cup | buttermilk | 125ml |
| 2 whites | large eggs whites, room temp. | 60ml |
| 1/4 tsp | cream of tartar | 1ml |

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Spray bundt pan with non-stick cooking spray; set aside. In small saucepan over medium heat, melt 2 tablespoons margarine; remove from heat. Stir in cocoa and chocolate extract. Set aside to cool. Into small bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside.
2. In large bowl with electric mixer at medium speed, cream remaining margarine, sugar, 9 packets Sweet'n Low (or 3 teaspoons bulk), egg substitute, vanilla and orange peel. Beat in reserved chocolate mixture. Add flour mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour and beating well after each addition.
3. In large metal bowl with electric mixer at high speed, beat egg whites, cream of tartar and remaining Sweet'n Low until stiff peaks form. Spoon into prepared pan. Bake 30 minutes or until wooden toothpick inserted in centre comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes. Remove cake from pan and cool completely on rack.

### Nutritional Analysis per Serving (1/12 recipe):

| | |
|---|---|
| Calories: 112 | Carbohydrate: 18 g |
| Fat: 4 g | Dietary Fibre: 2 g |
| Cholesterol: 1 mg | Sugars: 9 g |
| Sodium: 180 mg | Protein: 3 g |

Northern

# The classroom in crisis

feature

## Mistissini's school system deals with racism, high drop-out rates and cultural survival

by Steve Bonspiel

The educational system in Mistissini – and by extension the Cree Nation – is in trouble. So deep, according to some, that it is only a matter of time before there is a major crisis. And it is not just the curriculum and the high absenteeism that is a concern. Racism adds to the mix of an overall feeling of helplessness experienced by the students.

The Mistissini Student Council filed a complaint with the Quebec Human Rights in 2004 because of alleged extreme racist attitudes of some teachers at the high school. Coupled with the lack of support at home for many students, it may be one reason that Mistissini's high school graduates are ill prepared for CEGEP. the former principal at Mistissini's Voyageur Memorial School, launched an investigation into why graduation rates were so low in Mistissini and what could be done about it.

His findings were frightening.

He told *the Nation* about a lack of solid support for the kids who were not getting the individualized attention they needed and were falling through the cracks.

"When I came here, the school was not working," Bellemare said from his new office as Director General of the Socrates Elementary School in Montreal.

Only two students graduated the year he arrived in Mistissini. "That was unacceptable," he said.

Mere months after he was hired in Mistissini, Bellemare went on a mission to fix the school from the bottom up. He implemented individualized instruction and started to pay more attention to the students' needs.

"In Native communities, most of the teachers are non-natives, so their philosophy of education, their style of teaching, their concept of school organization is the one that we have down south. You come in and you have to mold yourself so you can work in it," he said.

"But when they arrive up north they have what I call a cultural shock and instead of adapting their mentality, their concept to the living people that are there, to the culture that is there, they try to impose it because they don't know otherwise."

Bellemare said his team individualized everything, not just the teaching but also the structure of the class.

"For example, we have a high rate of pregnancy at the high school so when a girl had to leave for pregnancy we would give her the work to be done," said Bellemare. "The teacher would keep contact with that person at home. We would get the homework back and make corrections."

Likewise, if a student left school temporarily to go hunting in the bush the school would create a personal program. And if a student had difficulty in math, for example, his teacher would organize a remake exam at the proper time for that person.

"Everything was individualized for each case," Bellemare said.

He also hired researcher Lucie Lapointe from the Université de Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue to identify problems and solutions for the elementary school. His goal was to fix the problem at the grassroots level and in five to 10 years, he hoped to fix the overall malaise at Voyageur.

Voyager Memorial Vice-Principal Dorothy Nicholls with the Grade 2 English class

Under Bellemare's reforms, high school graduation rates shot up.

"Mistissini became a sort of experimental lab where we really implemented new ways of doing things with the students," he said. "That had an impact on the graduation rate. It went from two in 2002 to six the next year, then it went up to 21, then there were 27."

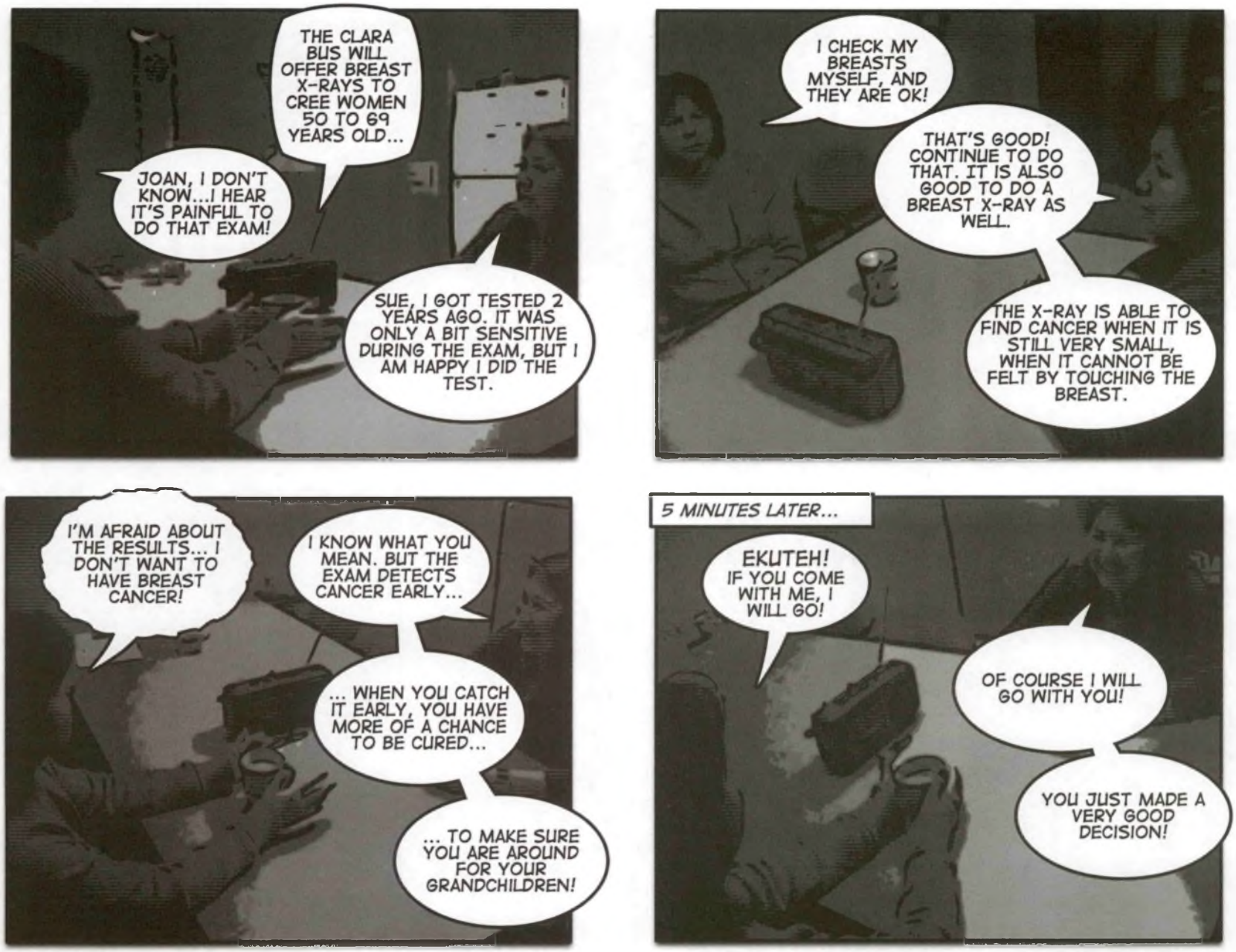
Summer school students, he noted, used to have to travel to Chisasibi, at least a 10-hour drive away. His solution was to secure two teachers and hold summer school locally so students could make another attempt at their failed courses.

His biggest achievement while in Mistissini, however, was a pilot project that started four years ago, thanks to Lapointe's findings.

### *The pre-K experiment*

Kids as young as four can now attend school full

***continued on page 25***


THE CLARA BUS WILL OFFER BREAST X-RAYS TO CREE WOMEN 50 TO 69 YEARS OLD...
JOAN, I DON'T KNOW...I HEAR IT'S PAINFUL TO DO THAT EXAM!
SUE, I GOT TESTED 2 YEARS AGO. IT WAS ONLY A BIT SENSITIVE DURING THE EXAM, BUT I AM HAPPY I DID THE TEST.
I CHECK MY BREASTS MYSELF, AND THEY ARE OK!
THAT'S GOOD! CONTINUE TO DO THAT. IT IS ALSO GOOD TO DO A BREAST X-RAY AS WELL.
THE X-RAY IS ABLE TO FIND CANCER WHEN IT IS STILL VERY SMALL, WHEN IT CANNOT BE FELT BY TOUCHING THE BREAST.
I'M AFRAID ABOUT THE RESULTS... I DON'T WANT TO HAVE BREAST CANCER!
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. BUT THE EXAM DETECTS CANCER EARLY...
... WHEN YOU CATCH IT EARLY, YOU HAVE MORE OF A CHANCE TO BE CURED...
... TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE AROUND FOR YOUR GRANDCHILDREN!
5 MINUTES LATER...
EKUTEH! IF YOU COME WITH ME, I WILL GO!
OF COURSE I WILL GO WITH YOU!
YOU JUST MADE A VERY GOOD DECISION!

Conseil Cri de la santé et des services sociaux de la Baie James
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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

"The Clara Bus will be visiting Eeyou Istchee in January, 2007. Cree women have the highest participation rate in Quebec. Let's continue this tradition!"

# Rangers are Forces' eyes and ears in Eeyou Istchee

On September 27 the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, Major Guy Lang, met with Cree Grand Chief Matthew Mukash in the Grand Council's Montreal office.

During their meeting Mukash spoke of his support for both the Canadian Ranger program and the youth wing of the program the Junior Canadian Rangers in the Cree Nations. Maj. Lang said he was highly impressed at the level of commitment and interest Mukash displayed in the two programs.

The Grand Chief spoke at length of his support to the Junior Canadian Ranger program and its benefits to the youth within the Cree Nation Communities.

In the upcoming months, plans are being made for a large-scale military exercise centred in the Cree Nation Community of Wemindji. The exercise will involve between 350 and 500 reservists from the surrounding areas of Montreal and Quebec City and will be strongly supported by the Ranger patrol in Wemindji.

Wemindji was chosen as the location for this exercise due to the success of similar exercises in the past. Maj. Lang is looking forward to the exercise because he says the patrol in Wemindji can be counted on to get the job done, whatever the job may be.

Maj. Lang said he looks forward to working more closely with the Cree to ensure that the Rangers can continue to be "the Canadian Forces eyes and ears in the James Bay."

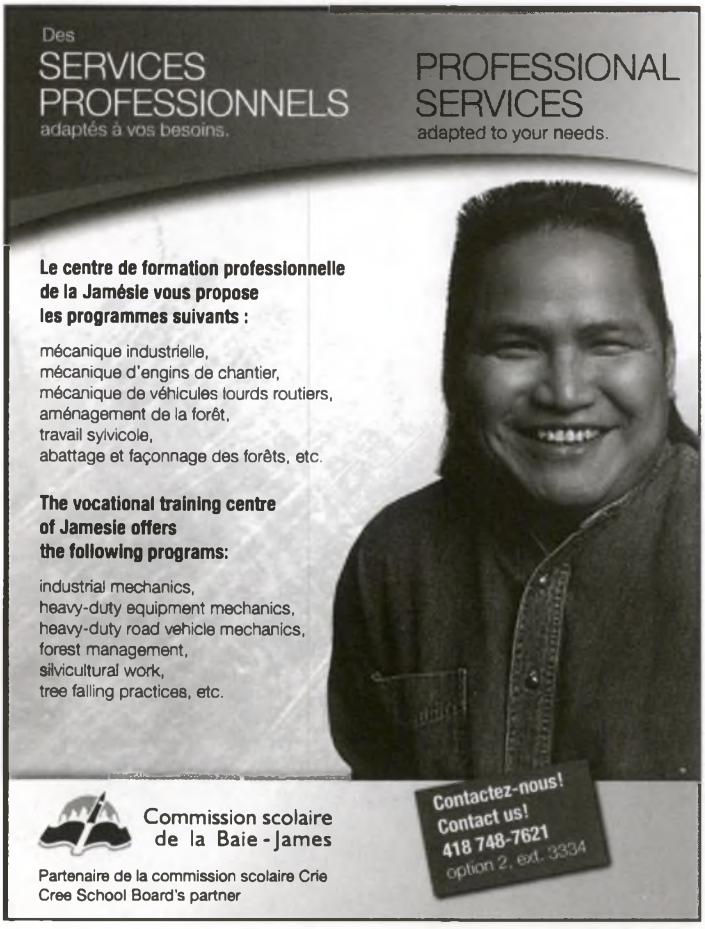
# Edith Cloutier to head UQAT board

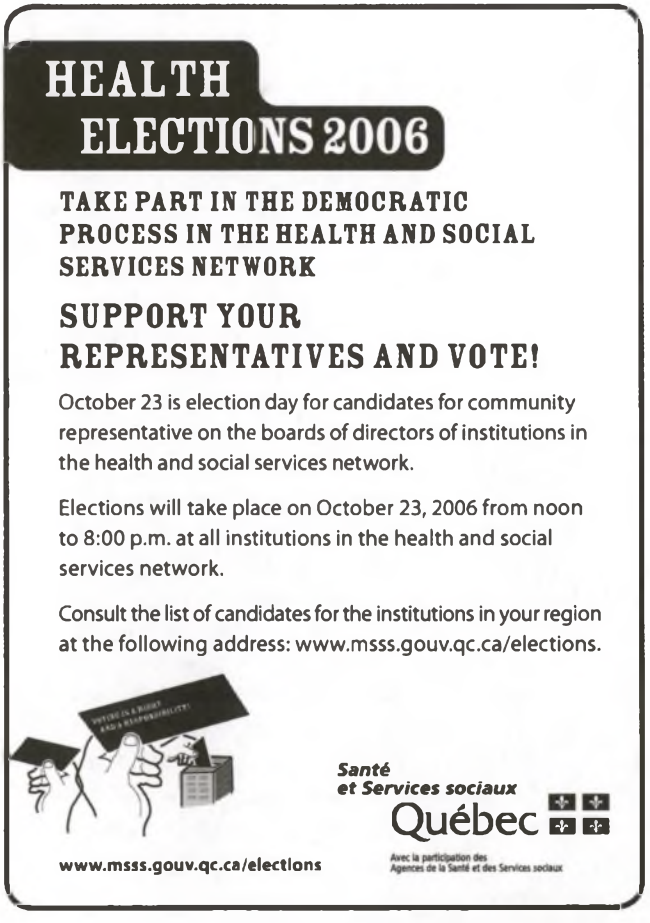
Edith Cloutier, the Director at the Native Friendship Centre in Val d'Or, can add another title to her name: President.

Cloutier, who has a degree in accounting from the Université de Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, was named president of the UQAT Board of Administration on September 27.

She has worked tirelessly in promoting the rights of Native people in Val d'Or and breaking down stereotypes amongst the general population.

Each year, Cloutier and the Native Friendship Centre organize a day where Val d'Or residents are encouraged to end racism and discrimination against Aboriginals.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October 23 is election day for candidates for community representative on the boards of directors of institutions in the health and social services network.
Elections will take place on October 23, 2006 from noon to 8:00 p.m. at all institutions in the health and social services network.
Consult the list of candidates for the institutions in your region at the following address: www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/elections.
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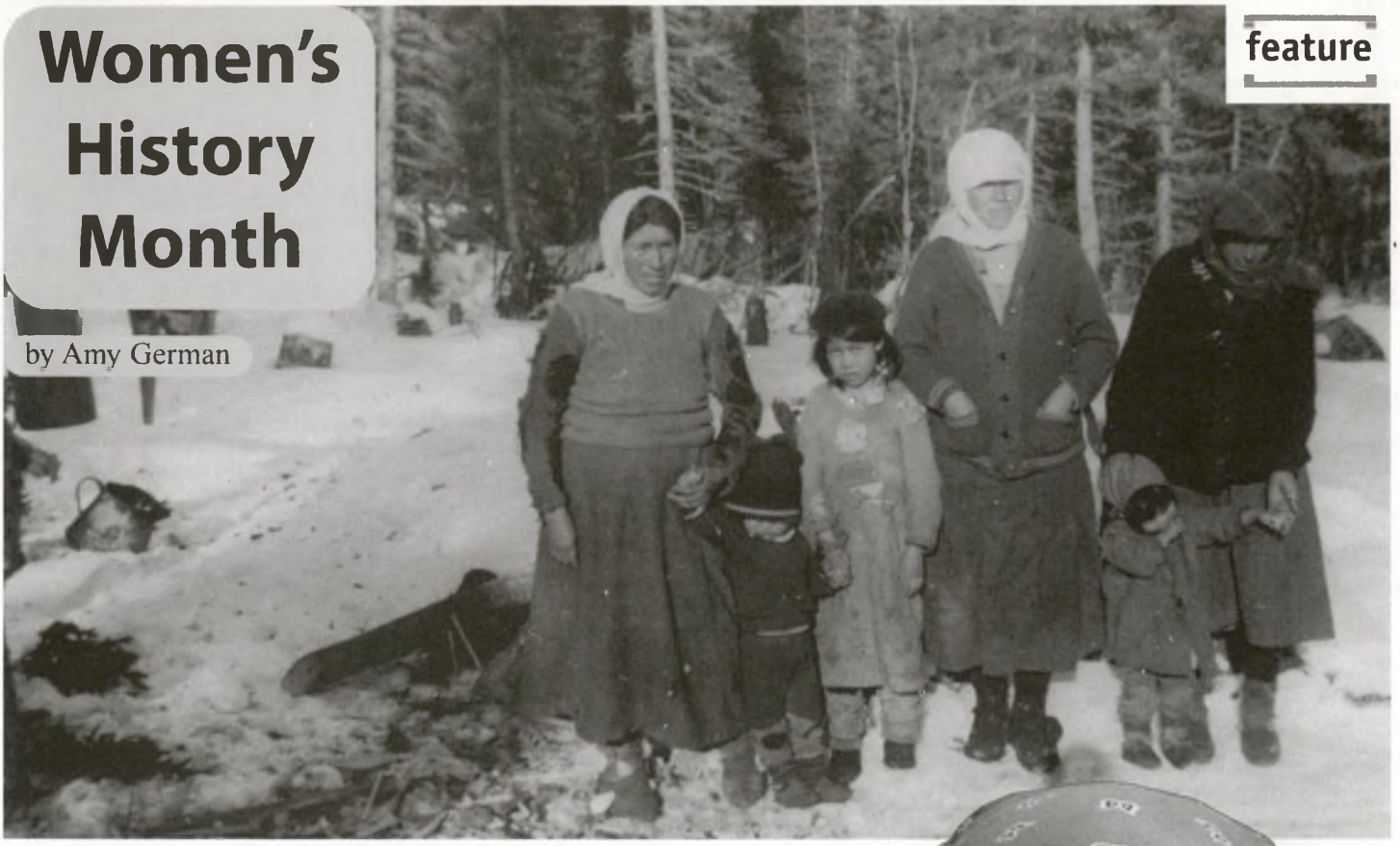
Santé et Services sociaux Québec

# Women's History Month

by Amy German



Did you know that October is Women's History Month? Did you know that the 2006 edition was dedicated to the achievements of Canada's First Nation women? Well, don't feel bad if you didn't, because while the federal government decreed this month be dedicated to women's history back in 1992 through Status of Women Canada, it has never been adequately publicized.

This should not come as a big surprise; women have traditionally been dropped from the history books in just about every culture. Though they bore the children, cooked, cleaned, set up camp, washed, rinsed and repeated, and even though their many contributions have been just as important as those of men, their history has often played second fiddle. Now, through this month-long celebration, the whole country has the opportunity to look at what women have contributed to our communities and Canada's history.

At a time when the government is cutting back on programs for both women's groups and aboriginals, there has never been a more important time to honour the achievements of women and First Nations women in particular. In this light, *the Nation* is spotlighting a group of exceptional women who have not only inspired their communities but have given from their hearts for the good of their people. From those who walked with God to spread his teachings to those who fought to get their rights back to those who dabbled in political waters and became the first women in politics for their communities, *the Nation* salutes you! Over the next two editions we will be highlighting the accomplishments of some well-known and lesser-known ladies who have contributed from their hearts and souls to make the North stronger.

## Annie Whiskeychan

The instruction of Cree language in schools has come a long way but it would never, ever be where it is now without the contributions of interpreter and Cree language promoter Annie Whiskeychan.

Annie was born in Lake Grasset or Apishigameesh, just west of Matagami, in 1937 to Malcolm and Hilda Diamond. The oldest daughter of eight children, she fondly remembers her early childhood days of spending time with her family on their hunting territory.

She was sent to Bishop Horden Memorial Residential School in Moose Factory, where she attended school for four years until she contracted tuberculosis and spent the following two years in hospital. It was during her time in Moose Factory that she taught herself Cree so that she could correspond with her grandmother, a move that at the time was at the time considered remarkable as usage of all native languages in residential school was strongly – and often violently – discouraged.

Women's History Month

**"It was in these following years that Annie developed her literary legacy and created Cree readers for kindergarten, Grade 1 and 2 that are still being used by the board today"**

It was these formative years that shaped Whiskeychan and laid the groundwork for her adult life as a language activist. She was not, however, immune to the homesickness, loneliness and alienation derived from being away from her family and siblings, something she nonetheless never complained of.

Once out of Moose Factory, Annie returned to her homeland and reconnected with her culture and kin. She learned the skills needed to live off of the land and eventually married Jimmy Whiskeychan in 1956. Together they had 10 children and as a family spent much of their time in the bush, only returning to Waskaganish when they could afford it, usually around the holiday season.

By the 1960s, Whiskeychan was applying her finely tuned language skills for the benefit of her community – translating, interpreting and writing correspondence for the chiefs of Waskaganish, particularly when visits from Indian Affairs would occur. She used her knowledge of English and Cree to translate the documents between the band and the government so that she could keep the community and its elders abreast of goings on.

In 1972 Annie graduated from l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi with a certificate in an Education program and found herself working for the Cree Way Project, an initiative to develop curriculum materials for Cree schools set up by John Murdoch and Annie's sister Gerti. This was the first major step for Cree language and the introduction of Cree culture in the school systems, where sadly it had never been seen before.

Whiskeychan spent the following five years teaching under the department of Indian Affairs and one more year after the Cree School Board was set up before becoming an education consultant.

It was in these following years that Annie developed her literary legacy and created Cree readers for kindergarten, Grade 1 and 2 that are still being used by the board today. Without the readers that Whiskeychan developed, Cree language instruction and literacy would not nearly be where it is today.

She also developed various readers on Cree culture and worked extensively with linguists to develop the Cree lexicon of the Eastern James Bay dialects. Among the various works she translated from Cree to English, and vice versa, was the first piece of local aboriginal government legislation that was passed by Parliament in 1984.

Whiskeychan spent much of her life devoted to the instruction of Cree language and to Christianity. She has frequently credited much of her accomplishments to her ability to find strength in God and much has since been written about her finding her faith in the bush back in 1963.

Whiskeychan was honored by the Cree School Board in 1996 for her tremendous contributions to the instruction and revival of the Cree Language. In the annual report that year, she was asked to comment about the development of Cree curriculum. She spoke about the wonderful changes she had seen since Cree language had been introduced. Her mission was accomplished; children's lives were enriched via learning what perhaps was most essential to them culturally: their own language. Beyond that, teachers had support in Cree language instruction by having appropriate materials for the kids. The language and culture that she had devoted much of herself to would now prosper for generations to come and as a result both teachers and students were happier as a result.

Annie Whiskeychan worked on curriculum development up until the time of her death on May 27, 1997. In the wake of her passing, the Annie Whiskeychan Foundation was formed in 1998 by the Cree School Board to continue her work and honour what she gave from her heart and soul to her community.

**In recognition of all Cree women who have contributed to our development as a Nation, we would like to thank you. Traditionally, women have played an equally important role in our survival and growth.**

**At the Board of Compensation, women have represented the interests of the Cree Nation as Board members for many years now. They are Board equal members at the Board of Compensation, CREECO and its subsidiaries. They are also an important part of the daily operations, at all levels of the organization.**

**Generally, on daily basis women face unique challenges. Through their actions of facing the challenges and overcoming the obstacles, many demonstrated their potential and perseverance.**

**It is with great pride that we support women in their careers. In all our companies, women hold meaningful jobs at various levels of our organizations. They are offered equal opportunities for professional advancement in a courteous work environment**

**We recognize the contribution that women have made, in the past, present and future. We, as a Board, will continue to value their contribution as equals in society.**

**On behalf of the Board of Compensation, CREECO and it's subsidiaries, including Cree Construction, Gestion ADC, Air Creebec and Valpiro, I would like to take the opportunity to offer our best wishes to career women, not only in the workplace, but in their domestic careers as well.**

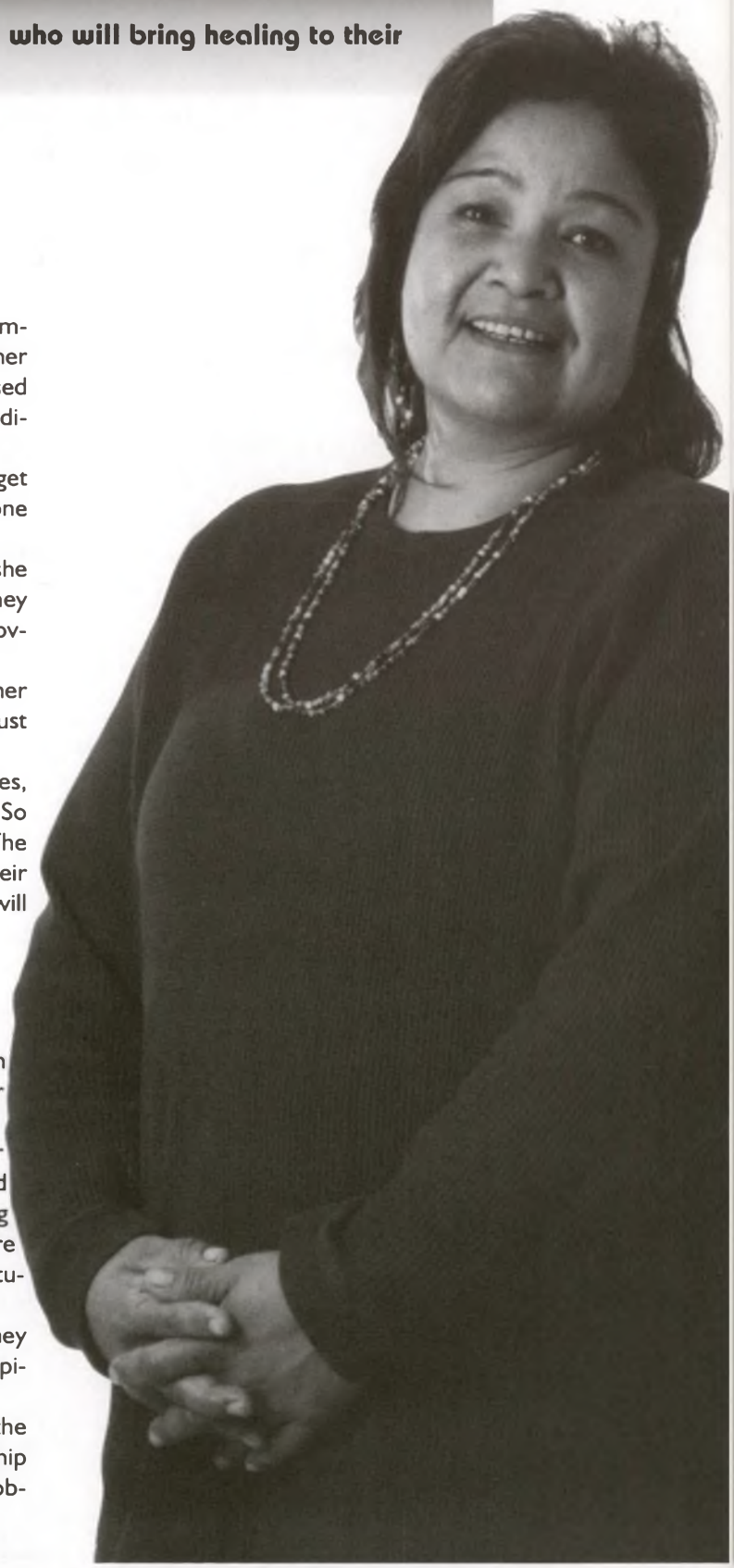
## Elizabeth Dick

Whapmagoostui's Elizabeth Dick has been working since she was a 15-year-old girl, the last 21 years for the band council. Married for 32 years and a mother of four, she is an Elder now, and her wisdom speaks volumes.

For the last decade Mrs. Dick has been working with her fellow Elders both regionally and locally to bring people together for various festivals. "We are trying to revive our culture in our community in working to help people go back and revive traditions that were lost from the community."

Women's History Month

**"It's the women who will bring healing to their communities"**



Dedicating herself to unifying her community and those communities around it, she has worked tirelessly, though she says her efforts were truly a labour of love. In particular, she has focussed on bringing together youth and elders to share culture and traditions.

"I was always concentrated on making people happy, to get them come together as a big family and be very close to one another, also to bring all the young people too," she said.

When asked why she has put the community before herself she responded with glee, "Because I really believe in my people! They have the talents and the wisdom. I find our community a very loving place."

What does Women's History Month mean to Mrs. Dick? In her case it's all about how women heal their communities, not just physically but spiritually.

"It's the women who will bring healing to their communities, but our own Native women have to heal too," she observed. "So when the woman heals, the Nation heals also in a community. The women have the wisdom and knowledge and the love for their community and it's their love, their unconditional love that will heal a community."

## Kathleen Wootton

Call her the accidental deputy Chief of Mistissini. Kathleen Wootton insists she loves her job, but early on a political career in Eeyou Istchee was far from an obvious career choice.

For as much as the residential school system set her up for academic success it deprived of her of her own culture. She did not catch up in that respect until years later. With her teaching degree in hand, Wootton headed out to British Columbia where she taught adults, a great deal of them Aboriginals. From her students, Wootton learned about her own culture.

"I was learning as much from them about native culture as they were learning from me," she acknowledged. "It wasn't your typical student-teacher relationship, it was like a partnership."

Years later she returned to her native Quebec and hit the books again, garnering a Master's degree in educational leadership from McGill University. It was upon graduating that she was lobbied to run for deputy chief.

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(ᐃᔨᔫ ᐊᐢᒋ)
Grand Council of the Crees
(Eeyou Istchee)
Grand conseil des Cris
(Eeyou Istchee)

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Cree Regional Authority
Administration regionale Crie

G.C.C.E.I.

C.R.A.
A.R.C

ON BEHALF OF THE GRAND COUNCIL AND THE CREE NATION, I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE YOUTH WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE CANOE BRIGADE OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK THE ELDERS, GUIDES AND INSTRUCTORS WHO JOURNEYED WITH THEM. SOME OF THE YOUTH TOOK THEIR CERTIFICATION ON WHITE WATER CANOEING, WILDERNESS FIRST AID AND CPR TRAINING AND SWIFT WATER RESCUE TRAINING DURING THE BRIGADE, CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF YOU WHO SUCCEEDED IN THIS. I HOPE YOU WILL TAKE THE VALUABLE LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED BACK WITH YOU TO YOUR COMMUNITIES, AND I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND YOU ON THE GREAT INITIATIVE YOU HAVE SHOWN IN BEING A PART OF THIS BRIGADE. YOUR COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES, AND NATION ARE PROUD OF YOU ALL.

GRAND CHIEF OF THE CREES MATTHEW MUKASH

## YOUTH

| | |
|---|---|
| KATRINA COON-COME | MISTISSINI |
| JEREMY NEEPOSH | MISTISSINI |
| CHRISTOPHER BLACKSMITH | MISTISSINI |
| SAMUEL LOON | MISTISSINI |
| VICTOR CHEEZO | NEMASKA |
| JEREMIAH TANOUSH | NEMASKA |
| JAMES MATOUSH | NEMASKA |
| DARLENE DIAMOND | WASKAGANISH |
| SHARON DIAMOND | WASKAGANISH |
| CHANTAL JOLLY | WASKAGANISH |
| LORI JOLLY | WASKAGANISH |
| GABRIEL BEARSKIN | CHISASIBI |
| JULIANNA OTTEREYES | CHISASIBI |

## HELPERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ERIC CHEEZO | NEMASKA | HEAD GUIDE |
| SHARON CHEEZO | NEMASKA | HELPER |
| ALLEN GEORGESKISH | WASKAGANISH | ELDER |

Women's History Month

**"Aboriginal organizations should be looking at how we can start to develop programs and services for ourselves, believing in our own people, that they can create programs and services instead of looking to the government all the time to create programs for us"**

"I believe in second chances," Wootton said. "I think there are different stages of your life where you go through different things. I don't think you just live one life."

Her first attempt at politics a few years earlier did not pan out. "People seemed to think [at the time] that I should run for chairman of the school board or this or that but for me it was not really something that I had (in mind) and I see it as fate in a way."

Wootton is the first female deputy chief in Mistissini and has perhaps paved the way for other women to come. "As far as leadership roles are concerned, in Cree society the Cree women are only just starting to make inroads," she noted.

As deputy chief, her goals have been to empower her people to do more for themselves and to take a role in policy making. "Aboriginal organizations should be looking at how we can start to develop programs and services for ourselves, believing in our own people, that they can create programs and services instead of looking to the government all the time to create programs for us."

A truly inspirational woman, Kathleen Wootton has devoted much of her life to her people and having won her seat again by acclamation recently, she has much more to give.

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Cree School Board
Commission scolaire Crie

McGill

# Congratulations

**to June 2006 Graduates**
**McGill University**
**Bachelor of Education:**

Jennifer Hester-Moses

**Certificate in First Nations and Inuit Education:**

Charlene Erless - Waskaganish
Dianna Salt-Hester - Waskaganish
Jane Snowboy-Gilpin - Eastmain

**Best Wishes to all Graduates**

## Annie Bearskin

When a mysterious disease claimed the life of her granddaughter, Annie Bearskin wasn't sure what to do.

"I had a granddaughter who was born in May of 1998, she was ten pounds when she was born and she was okay up until December," explains Bearskin. "Everything was normal for a baby [her age] and then she developed a cold and after that it was just one thing then another that would lead to infection. If it wasn't a cold it was an ear infection and so on, it just wouldn't go away. The more infections she would have, the sicker she became and weaker until she started losing a lot of things that she had already learned to do. I guess she regressed. She died in the month of March."

Her daughter was devastated, but at the same time still had the desire to have more children. The one thing Bearskin knew for certain was that she wanted answers, "We didn't really know what was causing it and that is why we decided to find out more. So that is when the parents got together and started asking questions."

**"They got in touch with researchers and they discovered a disease, Cree Leukoencephalopathy"**

She and others who had lost children in similar ways got in touch with Dr. Harris and Dr. Black, who narrowed the cause of death down to a genetic disorder. "They got in touch with researchers and they discovered a disease, Cree Leukoencephalopathy," said Bearskin. "They discovered that it was genetic, and then they found the gene. Both parents have to carry the gene for the child to be born with this disease."

Since that time a genetic test has been developed. A Cree couple considering having children can now be tested to find out whether they are at risk of having a child with the disease, much to the delight of Bearskin and her family. "I didn't expect to get results as fast as we did. I am really, really happy about that."

Had it not been for the perseverance of Bearskin and the parents of other children who had suffered such grim fates, the disease could have easily have gone undiagnosed indefinitely. Bearskin is still modest about what had transpired, however. "I don't want to take credit for starting the organization, we started together with the parents and if it had not been for their help it would not be there. But I did ask questions when my granddaughter passed away."

Bearskin and the other grieving parents organized The Eeyou Awaash Foundation and are creating a website so that others can get information. Years later, both of Bearskin's daughters have successfully had children who have not presented symptoms of the disease. But she recommends people remain vigilant.

"Now that we have the testing I would recommend that people get in touch with the health care workers in their communities. That is the best way to go."

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Cree School Board
Commission scolaire Crie

# Graduation:
## Certificate in Cree Literacy

*On Saturday, August 12, 2006, thirty-five (35) Crees graduated from the Certificate in Aboriginal Literacy. The graduates came from most of the nine (9) Cree communities. The graduation took place at Hotel Forestel in Vald Or, Quebec*

*The ceremony began at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday. Arnold Cheechoo from JBCCS acted as M.C. Pastor Gordon Petawabano opened the ceremony with a prayer and the ceremony was dedicated to the memory of the late Maggie Capassisit.*

*Maggie was a student in the program and completed all the requirements and was expected to attend the graduation. Unfortunately, Maggie died in a car accident in the spring of 2006. Her husband Real Lacroix and their children were in attendance at the ceremony. Her son Joey Capassisit-Lacroix accepted her diploma on her behalf. A candle was lit and there was a moment of silence to remember Maggie. Her picture was displayed on a table near the front. It was a memorable moment.*

*Two valedictorians spoke for the graduating class. Daisy Bearskin from Chisasibi from the northern dialect and Mary Jane Petawabano from Mistissini from the southern dialect. Each speaker related their experiences with the Cree Language and emphasized the importance of maintaining and preserving the Cree Language.*

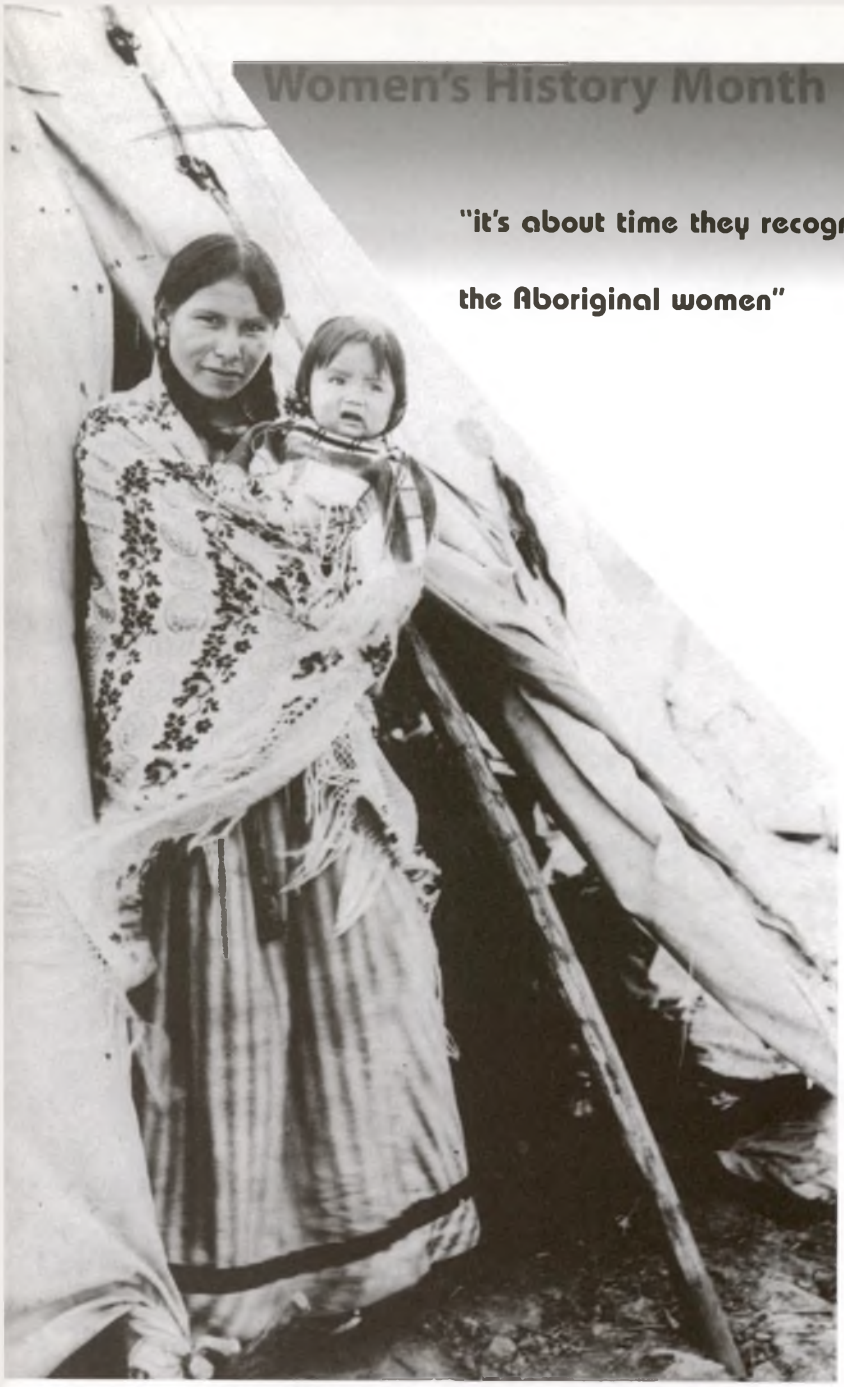
*Gordon Blackned, newly elected Chairperson of the Cree School Board gave his speech to those in attendance. Speeches were also delivered by McGill University officials. Donna-Lee Smith, Director of the Office of First Nations and Inuit Education and the Associate Dean of Programs at McGill, Jameshid Bahashdi both said a few words of well deserved congratulations.*

*The diplomas and gifts were given by Gordon Blackned, CSB, Donna-Lee Smith and Jameshid Bahashdi of McGill University. A dinner and dance followed the ceremony. Our sincere congratulations goes out to all the graduates and we wish them all the best. From all of us at the Department of Professional Development - Cree School Board.*

*Debbie House-Cox, Co-ordinator*
*Mary Bear, Education Consultant*
*Charlotte MacLeod, Education Consultant*

# List of Graduates for the 2006 Certificate in Aboriginal Literacy: Cree

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brenda Atchynia | Whapmagoostui | Arita Mark | Wemindji |
| Judy Rose Atsynia | Wemindji | Beatrice Mark | Wemindji |
| Daisy Bearskin | Chisasibi | Wendy Mark-Stewart | Eastmain |
| Margaret Blackned | Waskaganish | Emily Matthew | Chisasibi |
| Maggie Capassisit | Ouje-Bougoumou | Patricia Moses | Eastmain |
| Alvin Cheezo | Eastmain | Clara Neeposh | Ouje-Bougoumou |
| Lorraine Dixon | Waswanipi | Juliette Neeposh | Mistissini |
| Susan George-Scipio | Chisasibi | Clara Pachano | Chisasibi |
| Leeann Gilpin | Wemindji | Linda Pachanos | Chisasibi |
| Daisy Rose Gilpin | Eastmain | Joanne Pashagumskum | Chisasibi |
| Eleanor Gilpin (Cheezo) | Eastmain | Janie Pepabano | Chisasibi |
| Iris Gilpin (Sealhunter) | Eastmain | Mary Jane Petawabano | Mistissini |
| Samuel Gilpin | Wemindji | Sandra Rupert | Eastmain |
| Agnes Lameboy (Napash) | Chisasibi | Bridget Salt | Waswanipi |
| Pauline Lameboy-Dixon | Chisasibi | Stella Sam | Eastmain |
| Jane Longchap | Ouje-Bougoumou | Dinah Shashaweskum | Wemindji |
| Jeannette Shashaweskum | Wemindji | Lillian Trapper | Waswanipi |
| Ethel Taylor | Waskaganish | Irene Weapenicappo | Eastmain |



**"it's about time they recognize women and what they do, especially the Aboriginal women"**

For more information about Cree Leukoencephalopathy or the Eeyou Awaash Foundation, contact Annie Bearskin at (819) 855-9005 or check out: www.eeyouawaash.com/

## Annie Iserhoff

After many years as a minister in Nemaska, Annie Iserhoff is packing up to go back home to Mistissini. She says it's a decision that has nothing to do with a lack of love but a need to care for ailing family members. "My husband has his parents but I don't. We want to go back while they are still there and we want to help them in any way that we can. My mother-in-law is 83."

After preaching in Mistissini through the 1970s and 80s, Iseroff arrived in Nemaska seven years ago to work as a minister. She feels that this has been her life's calling, one that came in a rather dramatic fashion many years before. As a child in the 1960s Iserhoff had the typical grade school experience of being asked what she wanted to be when she grew up.

"I was thinking what I would be and I saw this picture of a woman, carrying water on her head in a jar. It almost looked like a picture from the Bible and when it came to me the teacher asked me what I would like to be and I said 'I want to serve the Lord,' He said, 'What do you mean?' I said 'Well, I want a ministry in the church, I want to wash the floor and do what I have to do and work getting water,' because back in those days nobody had running water. And I said that I would go fetch water from the lake for him and that was the picture that I saw in my head,"

Iserhoff laughed jovially as she explained what precisely that mental image meant to her, "I had a vision, I think I was about 10 or 11 at that time and that is the only way I could describe it."

Many years later it all made sense. "I came to see what it was as I ministered from the pulpit. I was carrying the water, the living water for the people to receive and I was ministering to them, to their needs."

Iserhoff has dedicated many years of her life to her ministry and the women's groups she participated in. At one point she ran the Women's Ministry. In response to what she thought about Women's History Month Iserhoff said, "Well I feel very honoured and it's about time they recognize women and what they do, especially the Aboriginal women."

She says that for the most part the women in her community are all very concerned about their families and about the growing drug problem. Her message to these women is quite simple: "Be strong, because the Bible says to be strong in the Lord in the power of His might. That would be for the women no matter what they face, no matter what they are going through, that they should be strong. And maintain their ground where God has placed them whether they are a pastor or a mother or a grandmother, just to pour out to your community and those around us."

When asked if she thought her mission was over, Iserhoff said certainly no, she always obliges when asked to do a sermon or a special service. "I will always be grateful to this community for their love, that they have recognized my work."

## Bella Nancy Mianscum

Though Bella Nancy Mianscum has had a number of different careers, perhaps what is most notable about her is what she has done for the longevity of the Cree language.

For the last three years Mianscum has worked as a principal at the Waapihtiiwewan Elementary School; prior to that she was a Cree language teacher for 12 years.

"Teaching the kids to preserve our Cree language was very important to me," Mianscum said. "We are going to lose our language if we don't teach our kids how important it is to learn our language."

Mianscum, however, did not always speak fluent Cree herself. "I attended a residential school, but when I came back after going to high school and university I realized that I could not read it and I spoke only a little bit of my language. I realized that if I got married and had kids, I wanted my kids to learn our language."

She then took it upon herself to learn her own language with the help of her mother. Fortunately, she also got some professional training. "They were giving out a Cree language literacy program (in our area) and I jumped to it. It really helped me to be motivated and to make a commitment to learn my language."

This, however, was only a beginning for Mianscum. Having already worked as a Sunday school teacher for many years, teaching Cree became a natural move. She studied at McGill University and earned a certificate as a Cree language teacher.

For Mianscum, speaking Cree is part of understanding one's own culture and identity, especially for the youth. "This is the only resource that they can hold on to," she said. "This is their identity; they have their own language, they have their own culture."

She also believes that it is best for children if they start learning Cree language at home from their mothers. "I truly, really believe that it's the mother that has to motivate the children to preserve our Cree language and not only our Cree language but our Cree culture. So it's so important that our Cree language is taught at home and mostly it's always the mother, she is the main care taker with her children and it's the mother that's always there for their children and teaching them. Cree is so important. It has to start at home."

Mianscum was also been the director for the Cree Nation Women for many years and has been very involved with the Women's Ministry at her church. She can not stress the importance of learning the Cree language enough and believes that it's not just a responsibility of mothers and teachers but just about everybody in the community.

Women's History Month

**"Teaching the kids to preserve our Cree language was very important to me"**

**"We are going to lose our language if we don't teach our kids how important it is to learn our language"**

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# Women's Safety

YWCA Canada recently released a national study calling for violence against women to be considered a national priority. It occurs among all ages, races, and religions, and to people of all educational and income levels.

Consider this: in Canada, the painful truth is that a woman is harmed, maimed, or injured every minute of every day. That woman is someone's mother, daughter, lover, wife, friend, relative or co-worker.

The tragic recent deaths of Ontario residents Francine Mailly and her three children, and Wendy LaFleche and her two children – both at the hands of their husbands – left many neighbours and friends bewildered as to how something like this could have happened.

Unfortunately, these events are chilling reminders of how violence in relationships can lead to serious injury, suicide and homicide. Part of the problem is that violence against women "within a relationship" is still not considered as serious a crime as is assault by a stranger. And yet, it happens more frequently: 69 per cent of women who have been sexually assaulted are assaulted by men they know. The bottom line: there is no excuse for abuse.

If you suspect a neighbour or friend is being abused, here is some advice from GTA-based Ernestine's Women's Shelter on what you can do.

### *Get Informed*

Gather all the information you can about local programs and services in your area that assist abused women and their children. These programs offer women safety, as well as provide advocacy and support.

In Quebec you can call the Native womens shelter of Montreal at 1-866-403-4688. In Ontario the Assaulted Women's helpline is 1-416-863-0511. Both places will talk with you about your concerns and services they offer. Your local health clinic offers services in your community.

### *Lend a Sympathetic, Non-judgmental Ear*

Lending a non-judgmental ear is crucial in breaking the isolation associated with abuse. Letting your friend know you care and will not judge anything she shares with you may be the best help you can offer. Without forcing the issue, let her know you are willing to listen when she is ready to confide in you. Never underestimate her fear of potential danger and remember to focus on your friend's right to make her own choices. Tell her you are there when she needs you, and provide whatever help you can: transportation, child care, taking care of a pet, etc. Make sure you access community supports and have information available for your friend if she needs it.

### *Direct your Friend to Community Services*

Once your friend asks for your help, share the information you've collected. Encourage her to contact a violence-against-women hotline or women's shelter. Let her know that she is not alone and that caring people are available to help. Reassure her that any information she shares with these services will be kept strictly confidential.

### *Focus on your Friend's Strengths*

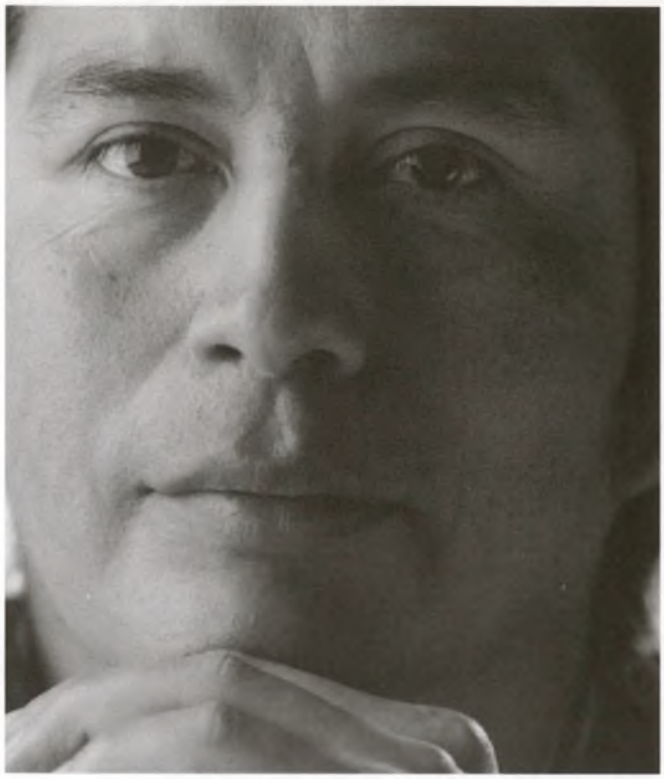
Many abuse victims live with emotional as well as physical abuse. Without any positive reinforcement from outside their home, she may begin to believe that she is deserving of the treatment she is getting. Give your friend the emotional support she needs to believe she is a good person. Remind her that violence can happen to anyone and it is not her fault. Violence is always unacceptable. Emphasize that she deserves a life free from violence.

### *Help Develop a Safety Plan*

Help your friend think through the action steps she will take to protect herself and her children should the abuser return while she is in the process of fleeing. Suggest she contact the Woman Abuse Hotline of a women's shelter to develop a safety plan for escape. Suggest she gather as many personal documents such as birth certificates, social insurance cards, immigration papers etc. It is also important to suggest that she take or make a copy of her deed, rental agreement or lease.

### *When to Intervene*

Call 9-1-1 immediately if there is an immediate danger to a person, or if you have a reasonable suspicion that a violent incident is occurring. It cannot be overemphasized that domestic violence is a crime that can result in serious injury and even death.



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*continued from page 7*

time in a highly successful program that is half French and half Cree. A year later the school added the English/Cree equivalent due to high demand from the parents.

"For the first days, all teachers' work at introducing the children to the idea of routine as far as being organized and responsible for getting their own outdoor clothes and shoes on and off, and lining up for the bus, and making a smooth transition between activities," said pre-K English teacher Linda Collier.

"Learning to focus on the task at hand and following through on it and learning the give and take and socialization skills of working together is a big part of their first school experience."

After lunch, the Cree pre-K teacher teaches the children in Cree for the rest of the afternoon. The kids who started the pilot project four years ago will continue to learn this way throughout their elementary years.

"A child needs to master a minimum of 80 per cent of the oral language in their mother tongue or in a second language," said Bellemare. "They were scoring 81 per cent in Cree and 84 per cent in French," he said. The numbers were similar in the English sector.

This program is seen as a long-term solution to improve graduation rates and the literacy skills of Mistissini's youth. And with over 60 per cent of the community's population of 3,400 under 25, it's about time.

Under his reign, vandalism, which cost the school thousands of dollars annually, went down considerably. He estimated that the cost of damage done to the school in his first year was more than $50,000.

It got so bad that the band council held a three-day workshop on vandalism to try to educate more people about it. The students seemed to get the message. By his last year, he said, there was only one broken window.

Absenteeism continued to plague the high school even after Bellemare arrived, however. He estimated that only 60 of 270 students attended full time.

He showed *the Nation* a chart illustrating the number of students in Grade 6 to Secondary 5 from 1997-1998 until 2001-2002. A large amount of students were bunching up in Secondary one and staying there: 92 in 1998, 94 in 1999, and 97 in 2002.

The maximum number of students in the other grades, meanwhile, was 72 – in Secondary 2 for the 2000-2001 school year.

The Secondary 5 statistics really showed the chinks in the armor. From a high of 20 in the first year of the chart, to low numbers of 7, 15, 8 and 3, the year before Bellemare arrived. Few of these students would actually graduate.

**"Mistissini became a sort of experimental lab where we really implemented new ways of doing things with the students"**

Letters sent to the Cree School Board for funding to investigate the problem went unanswered. It was the school's own budget, to the tune of $60,000, that enabled Lapointe to come in and nail down the problem.

With the low graduation rate, Bellemare feared, Mistissini was nearing a crisis of epic proportions.

"Secondary 5 is not a diploma that gives you specialization," he said. "It's a basic diploma that opens the door to techniques or to other courses."

"If you don't do things to make sure the native people get that basic, you're closing the doors to even little jobs that request Secondary five. And you're closing doors to higher degrees. To say that that is normal, is like saying the Native youth are not capable to learn the basic subjects."

Some teachers say this reality is not because of the way they teach, he added but because it's traditionally not in Native culture to succeed academically or they don't have discipline. "Teachers find reasons to justify their low rates," Bellemare said.

Eventually Bellemare jumped ship to the Socrates School in Montreal after he received a letter of reprimand from the Cree School Board in response to an emergency letter Bellemare sent to Indian Affairs, requesting help in the looming education crisis. He was told to watch himself; his actions were raising the ire of the CSB.

A second letter was sent to Bellemare last year, this time suspending him for three weeks. He had kicked the school supervisor out of his school for criticizing the new reform.

Bellemare finished the year and started the New Year to

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make sure everything was going smoothly. He resigned soon after.

"I changed the school regulations, I changed a lot of things," he said. "I thought I had the Cree School Board on my side because I was telling myself, with this, they must not be very happy with the result of their system. If I do better, they will probably back me up," said Bellemare.

"It's not the teachers that were against me or their union who tried to stop my reform, it's the fact that the Cree School Board, even though I had good results, were doing everything to shut us down, to stop us."

He said that his reform took the good things the CSB had going and made a few changes for the benefit of the students.

"I had the support of the school committee, which, in my idea, are the real representatives of the communities," he said. "It's their children that are there. So, as long as I had them and their support, I knew I could do everything. I didn't want to defy the school board but by not applying their little rules I was put on a black list."

Natasha Cantin and her Grade 2 French class

### *Academic racism*

A teacher who wished to remain nameless confirmed multiple instances of racist teachers at Voyageur Memorial that made her sick to her stomach.

"I think some teachers in there have racist attitudes," said the teacher, who we will call Julie. "I've heard comments like these students are stupid and they cannot learn. That kind of attitude by so-called educators is very wrong. When you go into that classroom with that kind of attitude, children can usually sense it right away. Young people are very perceptive with how adults behave."

The attitude points to a bigger problem than just at the school, she said.

"I think it was racism and outright disrespect towards Cree culture in general. Things like, 'They don't pay taxes; they get a free education.' Little comments like that," said Julie.

She referred to all the racism and gossiping at the school as a "cesspool." "I was not accustomed to such ignorant remarks about people. If I went to work in China or India, I'd try my best to respect the culture there."

She also has trouble with the curriculum and the way it's taught.

"There's really no curriculum and it's very hard to work without one," she said. "They tell you to teach math and whatever else, but there's no curriculum guide to follow. You make things up as you go along. Sometimes you have to fabricate marks."

She recounted being given a course to teach in the middle of February.

"When the marking system came along, I said I cannot give marks for these students because I didn't know I was supposed to teach this class. I got reprimanded for it. They told me, 'Give them marks, no matter what.' It was in the middle of a semester. Usually you're given your workload in August, when school starts, not in the middle of a year."

The report on the racism complaint launched by the student council in 2004 still has not been released. "There will be a report issued on the results of those consultations and probably with recommendations before Christmas," said Quebec Human Rights Commission spokesperson Robert Sylvestre.

"The allegations addressed the adaptation of programs to the realities faced by young Natives," Sylvestre observed. "Also, major deficiencies in the way the language of instruction is taught and complaints about the behaviour of some teachers. The questions that have arisen were numerous and complex. The Human Rights Commission decid-

**"I changed the school regulations, I changed a lot of things"**

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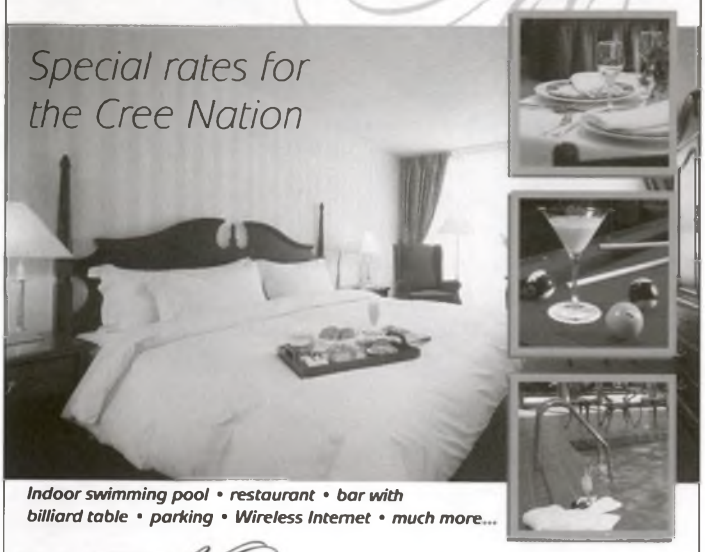

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ed that best way to look into the matter was probably not going through an investigation."

Instead of launching a formal investigation, the commission decided to hold a community consultation. That was held from November 2005 until January 2006. The Commission met with 400 people during that time, Sylvestre noted.

Kim Quinn, a local teacher at Voyageur Memorial has been put in the newly created position of Master Teacher. Last year, she attended Harvard to complete her Masters in Education. Her job is to help to fix the holes in Mistissini's education system and give support to other teachers.

"Some parents say there are holes in the students' instruction and they're not up to par," she said. "Part of my role is to see why that is. I also work with the teachers to support the current Cree language program and to offer suggestions to what I studied this year in language and literacy and help them implement some of the methods I learned."

Quinn hasn't seen racism first hand at Voyageur, but she has heard others talk about it.

"I've heard some of that [racism] happens," she said. "I've heard through non-native teachers who spoke to other non-native teachers that they heard negative remarks about our kids or stereotyping of our kids. These teachers were shocked at what they were hearing. I know it exists but I haven't seen it myself. I'd be really sad to see it because our kids really don't need their confidence shot anymore."

Quinn said that a teacher's frustration might come from certain students' lackadaisical attitudes towards school. In turn, the students act out because they are not getting the support they need at home.

Language is a major factor in the poor academic achievement of students, she noted. The answer is to make sure they master one language and then go from there.

"The kids mix Cree in with English and I don't feel that the kids are becoming fully proficient in any language. That impairs their learning as well. They haven't mastered a single language and from what the studies have shown is that the single most important thing is that students have a strong foundation in one language. If they master it, they gain more self-esteem and they gain skills in a second language at a faster rate," she said.

**"I think it was racism and outright disrespect towards Cree culture in general"**

### *The Christian alternative*

Some parents were so distressed at the educational reality in the community that they went ahead and started a new school.

The Dabwetamun Academy is a Christian private school that promises a healthy dose of Cree culture integrated into a religious-based academic program called Accelerated Christian Education, or ACE.

They started class this fall and are billing themselves as an alternative for parents who are fed up with their children's lack of opportunities at the Voyageur Memorial School.

The Academy is not funded by the Cree School Board, but relies on parents to keep it going.

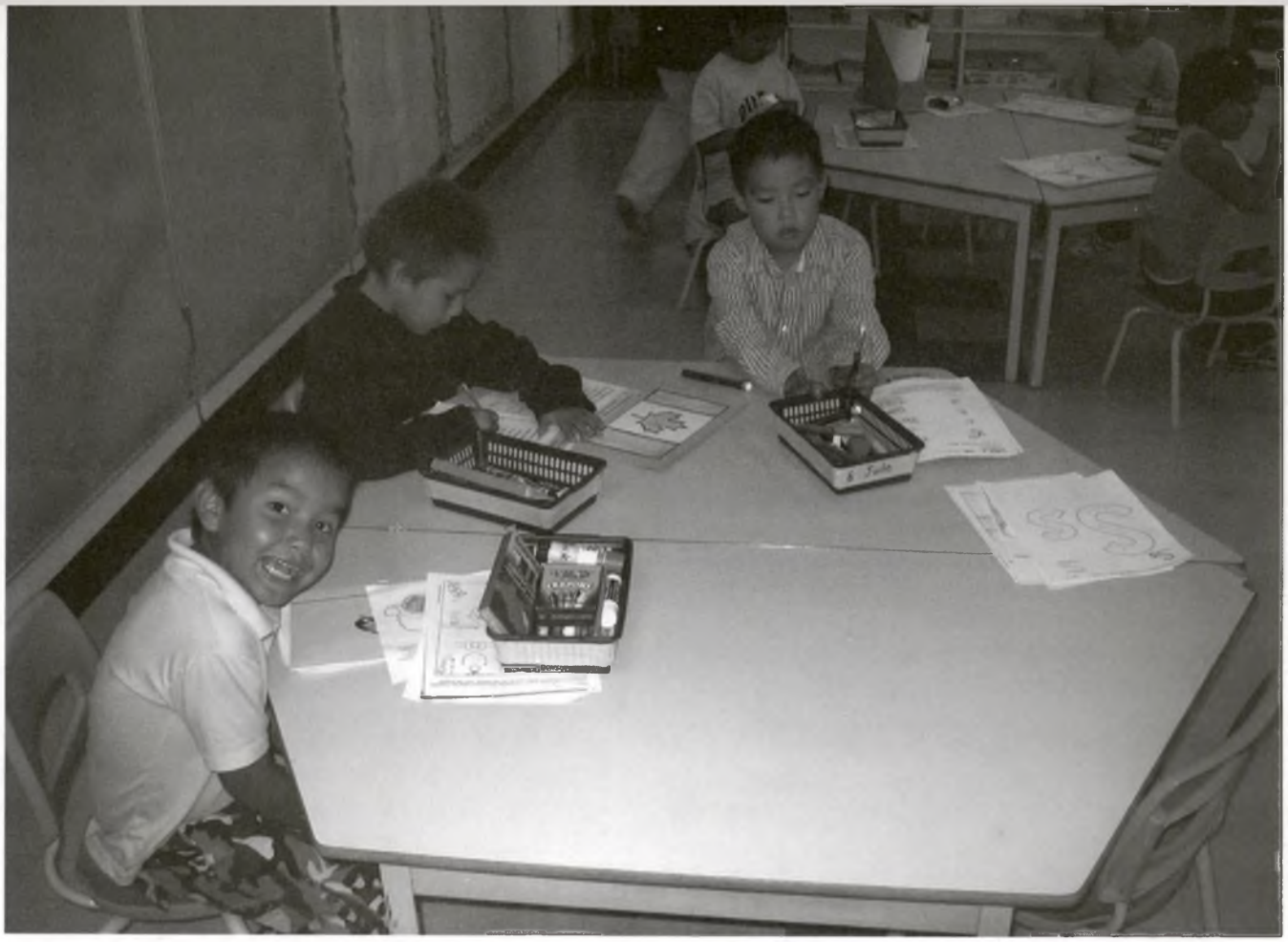
Parents pay $350 per month for 12 months of their child's education, a first for this level of schooling in Eeyou Istchee.

"You don't have to be Christian to attend, but you should agree with the principles and the fact that we read scripture and pray with the kids," said ACE Administrator Kathy Lemmert. "If they don't agree with that they will have a problem with the school.

Lemmert and her husband Steve, both non-natives, have been teaching at various schools in the North and preaching the word of God for many years. At one time, they even had their daughter Stephanie, who is now 18, enrolled as a youngster to learn Cree. They are a part of the community.

She talked about a time when the family was packing up and getting ready to leave. Her husband Steve had finished out his year as teacher at Voyageur and was not offered a renewal.

Community members asked them to attend a meeting



before they left and to their surprise, the idea of a private Christian school was sprung on them.

"When we lived in Waskaganish about 15 years ago, people talked about it then," said Lemmert, who added that the idea intrigued her and her husband enough to stay.

Steve's role is as a supervisor, which is the equivalent to a teacher. His job is to walk around the class to help the students when they need it.

The kids are separated into two classrooms. The first one, for children aged six to nine, is called the ABC program. Overseeing the class are two supervisors for the 11 students in the classroom.

The rest of the students are aged 10 to 17. Within both classrooms, students have a separate workstation that has "blinders" on the side so they can concentrate on their tasks at hand. Individuality, not peer pressure and competition, is stressed.

"The curriculum is the teacher, $50 million went into developing this program," said Lemmert. "It's standardized and the instructions are easy for the children to comprehend and do their own material.

"It's a pace system," she continued. "In a public system you have a class of 30 kids and one teacher at the front. Those students are all at different levels. Often what happens is the kids at higher levels are frustrated because they're sitting there and not being challenged. Then you have ones that are not getting it and are just shoved through from grade to grade. Then the kids get to the end of the year and they find out if they failed or passed. If they failed, it's a terrible stigma on a child."

The pace system goes by levels rather than conventional grades, Lemmert explained.

"We don't stress the grades to the child, we stress the goals and the goal setting. Every child has been diagnostically tested and placed at their level, where they can achieve. When they finish a pace, which is about 35 pages, they have several check ups within the book. They mark themselves and when they get to the end, they do a self-test. If they do well, we know that they've mastered the material in the pace and they're ready to take the pace test. If they do not do well on the pace test, if they get below 80 per cent, they redo that pace, not a whole year," she said.

Each pace takes two to four weeks to complete. Each subject has 12 paces per level, which consists of the usual core subjects of Math, English, Social Studies, Science along with Word Building, Literature and Creative Writing and Bible studies. Secondary 4 and 5 are able to choose electives as well.

"They're small, bite-sized, achievable goals so the child is always moving forward and not failing," Lemmert stressed. "Even if they do not master a certain pace, they go back and do it. It's impossible to fail a year."

There are 7,500 schools in 130 countries using the ACE program. Lemmert also told *the Nation* that anyone could be a teacher within this unique system, which has been around for 50 years. A teacher doesn't have to be certified to be able to tutor in the classroom under the unique learn-as-you-go system.

"We can train people from this community on the job. We

have one teacher who is teaching the ABC Group, and she is also finishing up her math from her last year of high school. In the high school it's a little different. (One of the teachers) Edna Voyageur is planning on enrolling in her master's degree program while she's at the school. So people can train and can get their education," she said.

The hardest part at this point is the lack of financial aid from the Cree School Board. Because it is not an accredited school and is not recognized in Quebec, the CSB will not dole out monies to help unless the province changes its view of the school. Quebec is the only province in Canada that does not recognize ACE schools.

Lemmert said that the integration of faith and culture are a perfect match for Mistissini's heavily religious population.

At the beginning of the school day, Elders open with Cree prayers for 20 minutes. The school also has a 15-minute period during the week called the healing circle that the Elders are involved in, as well. Other Cree-language activities include making snowshoes and sewing.

"We see the culture integrated and also the belief in God," said Lemmert. "Anywhere I go in the North, I have a hard time finding people who believe we came from monkeys. It's a natural thing with Cree people to believe in God."

Lemmert said that the curriculum is recognized at many colleges, despite the Quebec Education Ministry's lack of recognition.

"Colleges don't accept students on the basis of whether they came from an MEQ school or an ACE school, they accept them on the basis of academics," she said.

"Statistics have proven that these kids do better and are better prepared for college than kids coming out of the public system. MEQ has tested this program and they've found it to have a 15% higher academic content," said Lemmert.

There are 60 character traits taught throughout the year. These traits include honesty, diligence and respect and are taken from scriptural values, mainly from the life of Christ.

There is also a merit/demerit system to encourage the kids to behave. Coming to school on time for a week, for example, will earn a student the chance to bring his or her Ipod into school, so long as the music doesn't conflict with the school's values.

There is also a merit store, where students can use their merit dollars to buy stickers or other goodies. Merit dollars are earned through helping others, finishing tasks and good overall behaviour.

Demerit points are given for rudeness, bullying or swearing, among other things. Three demerits means a corrective action notice is sent home to the parents. They also get a detention the following day after school. If it's something more serious or continual, the parents are called for a meeting. They also have the right, says Lemmert, to expel kids in extreme cases.

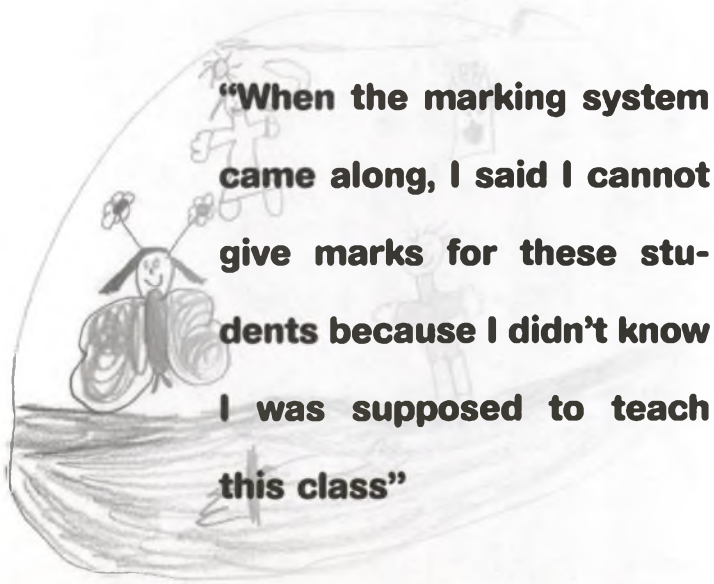
When they get close to graduating, says Lemmert, the students consult their projection sheet and know exactly how many more pace levels they must complete to accomplish the task. They are constantly self-testing and parents are always aware of their child's progress.

"The goal is that the student is successful in whatever they want to do. The education is a tool for them to do whatever they want to do in life and be successful at it," she said.

"You can have someone with an A+ average and they aren't successful. Maybe because they have poor self esteem or never discovered their identity. We teach them to be successful in all aspects. We make sure they have a strong Cree identity and appreciation for their culture, self worth and the academics that they need to be able to do what they want in life."

### *The CLIP program*

The public school system focuses heavily on language.



**"When the marking system came along, I said I cannot give marks for these students because I didn't know I was supposed to teach this class"**

However, they have struggled with how they should teach the Cree language in Mistissini.

The Cree as a Language of Instruction Program, or CLIP, has worked well in the coastal, more northerly communities. It immerses kids into the Cree language in Grade 1, and it focuses on strengthening the students' Cree writing skills. They are introduced to new vocabulary with long-sounding syllabics.

From there, according to the Cree School Board's website: as the students enter the grade two and three levels, the degree to which the students are taught in Cree is decreased. In the grade two level, 70% of the curriculum is taught in Cree whereas in the grade three level, it is 60%. By the third grade, the students are completely familiar with the Cree syllabic chart, including the long sounding syllables.

However, vocabulary continues to be developed at this level. By this time, writing is the main focus where the students compose short stories entirely in Cree syllabics. Journal writing is a frequent exercise. The students also participate in group activities such as writing storybooks and recording of monthly events, all of which are written in Cree.

For the remaining elementary years, Cree as a language of instruction is maintained. However, at the grade four level, the student reaches the Immersion stage of the CLIP program. At this time, the students begin the French or English sector curriculum which they continue until grade eleven. The students' Cree language instruction is reduced to one 90-minute period per day at the grade four level. This is continued until they reach the grade six level where it is two 90- minute classes per week.

From the grade four to grade six, the Cree language classes consist of lessons on several topics such as days of the week, months, body parts, animals, cardinal points, weather conditions, etc. - all of which continue to be taught in Cree syllabics. Other activities throughout these grade levels include board games, presentation of cultural videos, and reading of books written in Cree.

Kim Quinn believes that the CLIP program is not something that works in Mistissini due to its proximity to non-native urban centres such as Chibougamau and the continued erosion of the Cree language.

"There is not enough written text for these kids to learn Cree as easily as they would English or French. I don't know necessarily if a strong enough research base or strong enough program exists for these kids to learn Cree as a Language of Instruction that would work like other immersion programs have worked elsewhere. More needs to be done in that area, and maybe it would work at some point."

That is why the new pilot project was introduced four years ago to teach kids half in French and half in Cree starting from pre-kindergarten.

"The pilot project is working because there is a lot more instructional material in English and French," said Quinn. "There's a lot more to go by. I want the kids to have literacy

Grade 3 French class

skills and I don't know if they're necessarily having them with the CLIP program."

Quinn argues that children should have critical literacy skills by Grade 3 and should be reading to learn by Grade 4. "A lot of our kids don't have that," she complained. "They aren't able to read for themselves and become life-long learners. I don't blame it on any sort of program, but the pilot project might be the best thing."

She talked about the different levels of any given class in Voyageur and the difference in other schools.

"There seems to be an overall lack of parental involvement with the exception of a few in class," said Quinn, who attended Voyageur until Grade 4 and feels she was prepared at the time because she was an avid reader and had great teachers throughout her elementary years.

"That seems to be what really makes it more difficult for teachers to work in and for children to go to. The teacher has to spread their resources out a lot more than teachers would in another school. In schools like MacLean or the Christian school, you have parents that are more invested in their child's education. They will spend their money to take an apartment in Chibougamau or have their child board with somebody for that education."

Quinn said that the problem at the elementary level has to be corrected for the Cree Nation to flourish.

"Literacy is a foundation for everything. I know that our kids have fairly low literacy rates. I'm not sure if they're even functionally literate when they leave high school when they need to be more than that to go to college," she contended.

"If we want to have self-government and be more self-sufficient as a Nation, we do need to prepare our graduates a little more."

When she was a teacher, absenteeism was a daily factor. Only a third of the kids would show up on time. Forty minutes into class, she said, there would still be another third of the class that had not arrived.

"You lose a lot of instructional time," she said. "I think it's something the administration and support staff has to enforce more. It's common and it increases as they get older."

Despite all the problems, she would still send her children, if she had any, to Voyageur. "I'd send them to Voyageur because I strongly believe in the public school system and I believe that our school is on its way to making changes that will give the students more effective instruction," she said.

"We have strong teachers. It's just a matter of making all of our resources work together to make a stronger school. I also know that I can support my child at home and I do want my child to learn Cree."

***Family dilemmas***

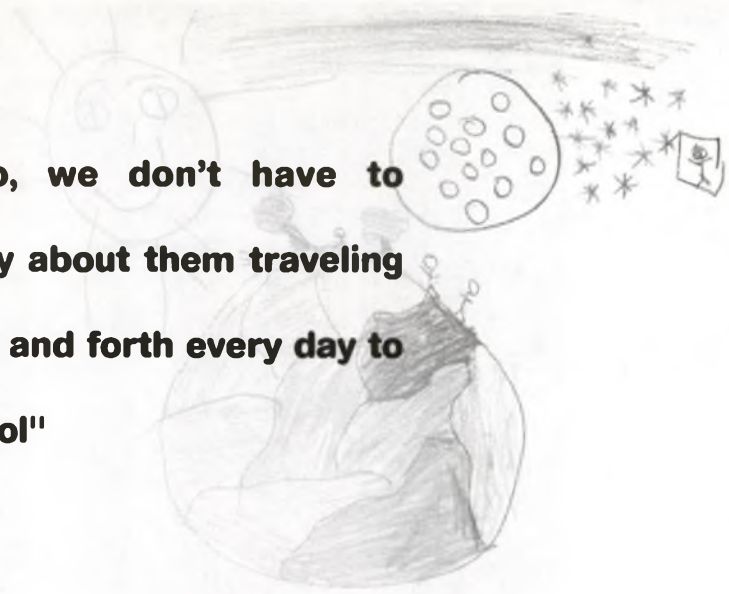
Calvin Blacksmith, the former Director of Policing in the community and a newly-elected band councillor, decided to send his children to the Dabwetamun Academy, at a cost of $1,000 a month.

He became disillusioned with the CLIP program when he was working as a police officer in Nemaska six years ago.

"My daughter Roberta was attending Grade 1 in Nemaska in the CLIP program," said Blacksmith. "We went Christmas shopping in Chicoutimi and lost sight of her. It took us 45 minutes to find her in the giant shopping centre. When we found her, she was surrounded by people asking her questions in French and English and she wasn't responding. That's when I first noticed there was something wrong with the school and the way language was being taught.

The incident frightened him and his family. The lesson, according to Blacksmith, was that in order to communicate in today's society, one must be able to speak in the language of that society.

**"If we want to have self-government and be more self-sufficient as a Nation, we do need to prepare our graduates a little more"**



**"Also, we don't have to worry about them traveling back and forth every day to school"**

Another incident occurred at a restaurant when his young daughter was in the play area when she was approached by two other kids who spoke English and French. Soon after she came back to the table, embarrassed that she couldn't understand them enough to play with them.

"That started to bother me," said Blacksmith. "More and more what I'd do is test my daughter. I'd send her to buy candies at the store in Chibougamau. She couldn't say or even point to which ones she wanted."

That was when he realized that the CLIP program wasn't suited to his child's needs. When Roberta entered Grade 2, the family purchased a house in Chibougamau and Roberta was enrolled at the English-language MacLean Elementary School. He and his wife would take turns staying in Chibougamau during the week so his daughter could learn to communicate with the French majority and English minority.

When they moved to Mistissini a few years ago, Blacksmith's children, Roberta, Whitney and Kiara, stayed in Chibougamau. Last year they sold their house in Chibougamau and decided to bus the kids to school from Mistissini.

The Dabwetamun Academy represented a chance to have their kids nearby and safe.

"We don't have to wake up at six in the morning and get them on the bus by seven. Also, we don't have to worry about them traveling back and forth every day to school. They will be in the community and if something happens, I'll be there within minutes."

Blacksmith was paying $7,000 a year to have his kids bused to Chibougamau, an hour each way. The new school added $5,000 to that total, but it was worth it.

"I know that they would bring some values into it and it's a good foundation," he said of the school. "We figured we would give it a try. I still have concerns about the school because it's not recognized by the MEQ. If we see there's no progress with our children, they'll go back next year."

Blacksmith said religion didn't necessarily play a big part in the decision. "My parents are very religious but I'm not. It didn't really influence me, but if they can get some values from it like respecting the Ten Commandments and respecting their parents, then that's good."

As the former Director of Policing in Mistissini, he has seen first hand how the lack of preparedness for CEGEP has affected Cree students.

He said that when potential candidates for policing were sent to John Abbott in Ste. Anne de Bellevue, the college would sometimes turn around and say that although they met the basic criteria, they were lacking in the area of instruction.

"In writing and reading, they were really lacking. It's going to be a crisis in the future here," he said.

### *The principals*

Dorothy Nicholls, the Vice Principal at the elementary school at Voyageur Memorial, sees the effects of new elementary level-pilot programs first hand. She is impressed by the French/Cree and English/Cree pilot project but says that the CLIP can never work in Mistissini.

"I think we're doing a lot of repairs," said Nicholls, who has been at Voyageur for 15 years and vice principal for the past six. "When Alain [Bellemare] brought in UQAT researcher Lucie Lapointe, she identified the problems."

Lapointe found that the children were receiving only 55 per cent of the required verbal skills, Nicholls noted.

Paul Rabbitskin and his Grade 3 English class

"Their vocabularies were very low. Even in Cree. At 55 per cent, they were moving on from pre-K to Kindergarten to Grade 1 and it was getting less and less. By the time they got to Grade 2 or 3, these children had nothing to transfer from one language to another."

When that happens, the child isn't fluent in Cree nor in the second language, Nicholls says.

"We were trying to give them a second language on top of the first language, which was not fluent to start with. There were gaps in the system and they caused many of the children to come to a lower level of education," she said.

When the vocational class ballooned to a larger size than the academic classes, that's when Nicholls said the more experienced teachers started to put pressure on the school.

The French/Cree pilot project is producing tremendous results and is seen by Nicholls as one way to fix students' learning impairment.

"The surprising thing is that their Cree ended up being the same as their French, which meant the transfer was really coming," said Nicholls. "Right now we have 40 students there in both pre-K and Kindergarten in that system. We have a waiting list. Parents are very upset when they can't put their children in, but they realize we have a limit," said Nicholls.

The pilot project will be re-evaluated at the end of next year when its mandate expires.

"I have parents saying to me that they have a child in Grade 4 and another in Kindergarten in this project, and they say that the younger one is so much more prepared than the one in Grade 3," she observed.

The reason it works so well, she said, is because the influence of French and English is so high in Mistissini that the educational reality calls for a program like this.

The CLIP program was successful in communities further north, said Nicholls. But, by way of explanation, she took a course that taught teachers Cree language instruction. Nicholls said that she passed the course, but found that her Cree wasn't as fluent as it should be as a teacher.

"We're so close to the outside, we're more southern than the other Cree communities, so the influence of other languages came into play as well. The fluency wasn't there. I passed the course and I would not say that I could teach pre-K or Kindergarten," she said.

"There's a need for Cree, for sure. We don't want to lose our language. But the development in our community is huge. I see more and more people coming in and working with our community. We can't stop the flow, so we have to be able to communicate with these people."

Francine Roy, who is non-native, started her tenure at Voyageur Memorial School in September 2005.

She was running a business unrelated to education before coming to the community, but with 15 years as a teacher and a no-nonsense approach to education, she was anxious to face the

new challenge.

"There is a large gap between the level of our students here and the ones down south," she admitted.

"Of course there are social problems. That's another delicate issue here. A lot of teenagers are into drinking and drugs. Some young girls get pregnant. There has been an awful lot of violence here lately," she said, sadly.

She talked about a meeting with the band council and the decision to strike a task force with the different Cree organizations on how to deal with the violence.

"Last year, especially with Secondary 4 and 5, we concentrated on trying to get them to graduate. Some of them were so far behind," said Roy, who talked about some students having 0 of 54 credits towards graduation, despite being in Secondary 5. "They were promoted without doing the work. This was a very serious situation," she said.

Some of the new measures she implemented to try and boost the graduation rates were for the long-term.

Roy said that under the old principal, the students were only introduced to sciences in Secondary 4. This year, however, the implementation of science and technology begins in Secondary 1 up until Secondary 5.

Another new initiative brought in by Roy is "Around the World in 80 books." The program promotes reading in every subject at every level. Each student will get a passport and travel around the world as they are reading.

"For example, in math, they could find the angle of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and then read about it," she said. "If they do five minutes of reading in each subject, imagine how much reading they'll do in a day? That will help their vocabulary and get them to improve their English or French, depending on what sector they're in."

Her goal is to boost student participation and encourage success.

"This year we're trying to promote school spirit. We're trying to come up with ideas for extra-curricular activities," she said.

"We're also starting a sport and art concentration. We'll have hockey, dance and art. It's aimed at Grade 6 and Secondary 1 students. It's to motivate the kids to stay in school and have good attendance," said Roy.

"We're there to provide services, it's up to the people in the community to take advantage of those services," she said. "It's my dream to have a Cree sitting in my chair one day and a Cree in charge of the CEGEP. They're smart, they can do it. It's just being persistent and going for their dreams."

**"Last year, especially with Secondary 4 and 5, we concentrated on trying to get them to graduate. Some of them were so far behind"**

### *A new post-secondary reality*

Two new programs popped up this year, after years of negotiation and review.

One of them is located at John Abbott College and is called the Cree Pathways Program. In it, students learn to adapt to their new environment and deal with culture shock.

There are currently 20 Cree students at John Abbott, many of whom will benefit from this new program, which works as a buffer between high school and college. If a student doesn't do well, they can still earn credit toward future studies while not carrying a poor academic record.

The program helps them find an apartment and deal with homework as well. "The first two weeks are the critical weeks. That's the make-or-break period," said Pedagogical Counselor Darlene Wapachee, who is from Mistissini.

"It's been in the works for a long time," said Wapachee. "We knew we had to do something for our Cree students because as soon as they come to college, it's too overwhelming so they end up failing their first semester."

The Pathways program was promoted at career fairs in three Cree communities. But for some, it's not the answer in

**Voyager Memorial Principal Francine Roy and Director of Chibougamau College Studies Gary James**

furthering their education.

This year marked a first for Mistissini students who weren't interested in the bright lights of the big city.

Fourteen students have enrolled in a preparatory program called the Ashuugans Program. It's similar to the Cree Pathways Program, but was designed for students who wish to remain near their families.

"Our program is addressed to those who don't want to go out of town, those who want to stay close to their communities," said Gary James, Director of the Chibougamau College Studies Centre. He is also coordinator of the three-year pilot project.

The College Studies Centre is affiliated with St. Felicien College and has served the Cree communities for over 15 years.

James met Francine Roy, Voyageur's Principal in June 2005 and they decided that there was a pressing need for the project. They presented it to the Cree School Board and it was accepted.

Of the 12 courses offered, 10 are at the college level and students will be credited for them. Two other courses are for upgrading math skills.

"We have a course that's called personal and social development as well as humanities and knowledge," said James. "In those courses, they see all the cultures in Quebec. We teach them how to budget and what they need for the first year of college. At the end of this program, they'll have the choice to go to any CEGEP."

If demand is high enough the program could become a full-fledged CEGEP in a short period of time.

### *The politicians*

Ashley Iserhoff, the Deputy Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees and a Mistissini resident, attended Voyageur Memorial School until Grade 6. When he went down south he was not prepared for the culture shock.

"When I first went down for Grade 7, I barely passed my year," said Iserhoff. "I was told that I was a year behind. Now I understand that some kids are three or four years behind."

He said that although the curriculum is not up to the standards of the southern schools, it's up to the parents to make up for it.

"We have to make changes and adjustments so our kids can succeed. First and foremost I think parents need to get involved with their children's education. Whatever you teach your kid at home, that's what they are going to use in life," he said.

"We have to start igniting fires in them. To make sure they're able to read and to succeed. They need that education so they can move on and achieve their dreams.

"We want kids to succeed in our communities and we want them to succeed when they go out," he continued. "So they do have to learn Cree and French and English to succeed. People cannot limit themselves by saying that they'll stay around their home communities the rest of their life."

Iserhoff pointed to NHL superstar Jonathan Cheechoo as an example of what someone can do when they put their minds to it. "He had to leave his community to achieve what he wanted to do."

Gordon Blackned, the newly-elected Chairman (and former Director General) of the Cree School Board, also hails from Mistissini.

"It seems to be working quite well," Blackned said of the French/Cree and English/Cree pilot project. "The students are grasping the second language much better because of the proximity of the southern institutions to Mistissini."

Although he agrees with the project, he said that his community will have to make a choice of which direction they want to go.

"Identity is very important and it's something that is very close to the heart of a people. I have concerns about that. I have grandchildren in Mistissini," said Blackned, who said that he is impressed that his six-year-old granddaughter speaks very good Cree and has picked up French and English as well.

Blackned has been involved with education for 30 years as a teacher and administrator. He knows the ins and outs of the Cree system and realizes changes have to be made.

"I think it's time that the Cree Nation, through our leadership, decides if we're going to continue to be Cree and to speak our language," said Blackned.

He continues to believe that while Cree language and culture is strong, schools need to continue to reinforce the Cree difference.

"If we lose our language and culture and are assimilated into non-native society, we'll be the same as the Mohawks or some of the other First Nations across the country, said Blackned. "They are almost at a losing battle in trying to get back their language."

**"The surprising thing is that their Cree ended up being the same as their French, which meant the transfer was really coming"**

## Sabtuan Continuing Education – Job Posting

# ASP Construction Safety Course Teachers

### Urgently Required

Sabtuan Continuing Education is currently seeking people interested in taking a program that will qualify them to teach the ASP Construction Safety Course in their own community. One person from each community is required, but two people are preferred. In the communities where there is already a qualified instructor, only one applicant will be selected. These positions are urgently required as there is a backlog of people that need this course to work outside of their respective communities.

If you are interested in applying for this position and you meet the required qualifications, then contact the Sabtuan Education Consultant assigned to your community.

### Coastal communities:

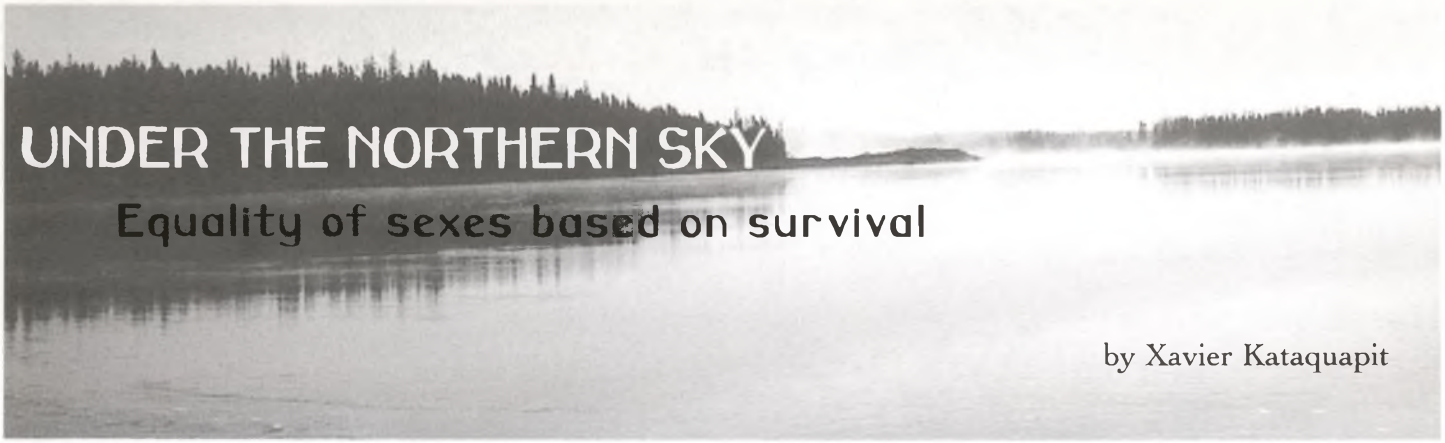
| | |
|---|---|
| Whapmagoostui / Chisasibi | Consultant – Roberta Ottereyes-Neacappo<br>Tel: 819-855-2230 Fax: 819-855-2519 |
| Wemindji | Consultant – Rene Blackned<br>Tel: 819-978-3090 Fax: 819-978-3099 |
| Eastmain / Waskaganish | Consultant – Vance Bear<br>Tel: 819-895-8852 ext. 330 Fax: 819-895-8877 |

### Inland communities:

| | |
|---|---|
| Nemaska / Ojay | Consultant – Paul Adams<br>Tel: 418-745-2383 ext. 229 Fax: 418-745-3544 |
| Waswanipi | Consultant – Marcel Martin<br>Tel: 819-753-2775 Fax: 819-753-2776 |
| Mistissini | Consultant – Annie Iserhoff<br>Tel : 418-923-3347 Fax : 418-923-2270 |

### Criteria for Course Instructors

- They must have taken the ASP Construction Safety Course and hold a certificate issued by CSST / ASP or any other institution recognized by the CSST.
- Must have a Sec. V diploma or equivalent.
- The candidate must have worked 6 years in the construction area, if not years of schooling after Sec. V will be considered.
- Two years minimum work experience required as a worker or manager in the construction industry.
- Other Recognized Work Experience in the areas of accident prevention or industrial hygiene, work in a trade or specialty (plumber, electrician, welder etc...), experience as a trainer in the Quebec education system with teaching material related to the construction industry.
- Finally all candidates upon completion of the instructor's course must pass an evaluation test by the ASP.



# UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

## Equality of sexes based on survival

by Xavier Kataquapit

Someone informed me the other day that there is a Women's History Month designated by the Government of Canada. Women are celebrated during the month of October for their contribution to Canadian society. This got me to thinking about all the strong women that I have known in my life.

The first person that comes to mind when I think of women in my life is my mother Susan. She grew up in a traditional lifestyle on the shores of the Nawashi River, north of Attawapiskat on the James Bay coast. She lived with an extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters and cousins. There were plenty of women in her life and she grew up in a spirit of strong bonds and family ties. The men of the family did much of the main hunting and gathering but women had a great role in their survival as well.

When my people lived a traditional, nomadic way of life, women were equals to their male partners. It was a way of ensuring survival in the harsh conditions of living on the land. Women could not rely completely on men to bring them their food or to do all the hard work of maintaining a home. Nomadic hunting and gathering required someone to go out on the land to hunt and trap, which usually required a great deal of moving around from location to location. This was not easy for a family with children, so young ones were left at a home base with one of the parents, most often the mother.

While the father hunted by himself or with a small group of adults, the mother had to maintain the home. This meant that hunting, trapping or fishing had to be done close to home to maintain a supply of food for the family. She also had to spend much time alone holding the family together. She had to maintain a fire and collect firewood, roots for rope, and fresh pine tree boughs for the shelter, all the while caring for the children.

Mom has many stories of growing up on the Nawashi River with her family. Her stories are similar to many I have heard from female Elders I know up north. Women were just as capable as men in working, hunting, fishing and gathering. When families were left alone in the wilderness, the mother had to know how to hunt, trap, fish and gather to ensure the survival of the family. The women had all the skills of a male trapper or hunter. This included tracking, handling firearms, skinning and butchering animals, storing food and preparing food for eating. Having a female partner who knew everything about fishing meant that both partners could gather food and provide a better future for their family.

Women can be physically strong individuals as well. Mom related many stories of working hard with her family to transport their belongings when the family was moving on their land. Women had to bear the weight of heavy loads and be capable of travelling great distances in any season whenever necessary.

Both my parents, Marius and Susan, encouraged all their children to be able to do everything to maintain a home. They cautioned us to not fall into modern way of thinking when it came to male and female roles. They taught us boys to never shy away from activities, chores or work that would be considered feminine. Our two sisters received the same treatment and they were taught all types of skills.

When my grandfather, Xavier Paulmartin, died in the early 1980s, my grandmother Louise was left with her youngest daughter and granddaughter in their small home. She was always a strong-willed person and after the initial loss, she pretty much felt comfortable in doing everything there was to do for her home. She had a lot of help from her sons and relatives, but she wanted to be self-sufficient.

I can remember her thinking nothing of taking her small Yamaha Bravo with a toboggan in tow to fetch snow for drinking water or to collect wood for her fire. As young boys, my brothers and I were often called upon to serve as helpers whenever she went to do any work or chores, but she was capable of working right alongside us.

Our women also have a great role in leadership positions. They bring a wealth of knowledge and a different perspective that often centres on the health of communities and people rather than for power and control. In recent years I have seen more and more women taking the roles of chiefs, administrators and decision-makers in our First Nation communities.

It has taken many years and generations to instil our modern ideas of the roles of men and women but our traditional system of equality for survival is still alive in the women who are taking an active role in the organizations that greatly affect the lives of our people. You go, girlfriend.

Conseil Cri de la santé et des services sociaux de la Baie James
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Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay

# Executive Director

## The Role

Responsible, under the authority of the Board of Directors, for the administration and operations of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay; Ensures that the resolutions of the Board of Directors are carried out, and submits all necessary items to the Board of Directors for its approval; Ensures the planning, organization, coordination, implementation, evaluation and controls for the quality and accessibility of all the client-centered and community-based services and programs provided to the population, as well as the human resource development activities to support these goals; Ensures the effectiveness and efficiency of human, financial, material and information resources systems to support the goals of the organization;

## The Challenges

Implementing the last two years of the 5 year Strategic Regional Plan (new services, programs, department and capital projects) and delivering the required services to the population at regional and local levels; Organizing and supporting the accountability process in the implementation of the Strategic Regional Plan both at the regional and local level; Integrating the Eeyou Nation Vision Statement on Health and Social Services into the intervention philosophy and objectives of the organization, and its services, administration and operations; Implementing an Eeyou Nation holistic approach to health and well-being according to Cree values and Traditional healing practices; Planning and managing the development of new services, programs, departments and capital projects, as well as the enhancement of present services; Developing and implementing a comprehensive Human Resources Development Plan as well as a Medical Manpower Plan and collaborating with the Cree School Board to ensure that management and professional services are provided by Eeyouch.

## Profile

A leadership style which encourages participation and commitment to organizational objectives, and the valuing of the contribution of the staff; An executive team leader with excellent communication and people skills; A strategic vision of organization, and sensitivity to changes in the needs of the Cree environment; A highly developed decision-making capacity and experience in change management; A management approach focused on effectiveness, and tangible results; A proven track record of exceptional organizational performance; Ability to maintain excellent relationships with partner organizations.

## Requirements

Masters Degree in Administration, or a Masters Degree in a health or social services discipline, or equivalent knowledge and experience to a Masters Degree in Administration, or five to seven years experience in Executive or Senior Management; Good knowledge of Quebec Health and Social Services Network; Excellent working knowledge of two languages: Cree, French or English; commitment to learn the third one is essential; Knowledge of First Nation health and social service issues, practices and trends, as well as postcolonial issues; Knowledge of the Cree Language, Cree Culture and Cree milieu are valuable assets.

## Conditions

Based in Chisasibi, the remuneration and social benefits are according to the policies applicable to (hors cadre) administrators in the MHSSQ network, and the CBHSSJB (class 26). In addition to the usual fringe benefits, the employer provides the housing, defrays the moving and storage costs for employees recruited further than 50 kilometers. There is a northern allowance of $6,773 to $10,834 and 3 or 4 sorties, depending on the incumbent's status (single or with dependants). The CBHSSJB ensures access to this post to anyone, without discrimination, wishing to apply. In case of equally qualified applicants, priority is given to senior administrators and officers in the health and social services.

Please forward a copy of degree(s), a brief statement of your philosophy of a First Nation Health and Social Services, a covering letter describing your interest and established qualifications for the position and a copy of your current resume by mail, post-marked before midnight of October 29, 2006 to the following address:

Mrs. Dianne Reid
President of the Selection Committee for the Executive Director
Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay
P.O. Box 250 - Chisasibi, Quebec - J0M 1E0

For confidentiality purposes, CVs sent by fax or email will not be accepted. Information about the position may be obtained by calling (819) 855-2844. We thank in advance all who apply.

**BIRTHDAYS - 101**

Happy Birthday to Delores Lameboy her birthday is on september 30, 2006. And to Kathleen Pepabano on September 24. Happy Birthday to you gals and many more to come. From Sharon, Philip, Josephine and Tyler Matoush from Montreal.

The walks at the parks are getting colder and the smell of autumn is in the air. I get excited just the thought of the leaves turning red, orange and yellow. It reminds me of how much fun we had throughout the year. This Thirteenth of October, I don't know if you realize, you'll be turning four. I cannot wait what this fourth year is going to be like but it sure does make me feel old. I hope this year will still bring you full of joy as it did the year before. Happy Birthday Amira I love you! With lots of love, your Mommy.

I would like to wish a Happy Belated Birthday to my cousin the city boy Matteo Saganash. Wow..you finally turned one..on August 26, 2006 and I'm sorry this is late but better late than never..right? lol Hope you had fun on your birthday sorry I couldn't come to your party..it's just that you live too far. LOL I would like to wish a Happy Belated 15th birthday to my 2nd favourite Aunt Marjolaine Happyjack aka MJ..Wow..your getting really old..juss kiddin Auntie. And Last but certainly not least.. A Happy Birthday wish going out 2 my Uncle Nathaniel Saganash on October 25, 2006...Happy birthday you old fart!! LOL...juss kiddin. I'm guessing your getting old since you didn't want to tell us your age, don't worry it's not like I will love you less but I really do hate when you pick on me..you know you shouldn't do that to an innocent & helpless little guy like me. Like my mama says "pick on your own size!"...LOL by the way, are you 26 or is 27? anywayz, age ain't nothing but a number...right? All I know is that your old...haha From: Your cousin & Nephew Lennox Longchap

Miss Martina Sam will be celebrating her 7th birthday on October 7, 2006. Wishing you many more fun birthdays to come! With lots of hugs and kisses. From Christine, Perry, Wabin, Bruce and Anthony-boy.

We would like to wish a happy birthday to our auntie

Public Works and Government Services Canada
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada

## Office of Small and Medium Enterprises (OSME)

**Public Works and Government Services Canada** (PWGSC) wishes to announce that the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises (OSME) has expanded to open six new regional offices across Canada. The OSME regional offices are being located in PWGSC regional headquarters in: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

The regional offices are part of the OSME's overall effort to make procurement more accountable and cost-effective by ensuring small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have access to compete for government opportunities. The OSME will ensure this access through collaboration with industry associations and individual businesses on procurement policy changes, and through the delivery of training, information, and support tools to SMEs.

For more information, please visit the following website: **www.pwgsc.gc.ca/sme**, or e-mail: **osme@pwgsc.gc.ca**, or call: **1 800 811-1148**.

## Bureau des petites et moyennes entreprises (BPME)

**Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada** (TPSGC) souhaite annoncer que le Bureau des petites et moyennes entreprises (BPME) prend de l'expansion et qu'il a ouvert six nouveaux bureaux régionaux au pays. Les bureaux régionaux du BPME sont situés dans les bureaux régionaux de TPSGC à Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton et Vancouver.

Les bureaux régionaux participent à l'effort global du BPME visant à rendre le processus d'approvisionnement plus rentable et efficace en veillant à ce que les petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) aient la possibilité de participer aux occasions de marchés publics. À cette fin, le BPME consultera les associations sectorielles et les entreprises sur les modifications des politiques sur les achats et il offrira du perfectionnement, de l'information et des outils pour appuyer les PME.

Pour plus de renseignements, consultez le site Web **www.tpsgc.gc.ca/pme**, ou communiquez avec le BPME par courriel, à l'adresse **bpme@tpsgc.gc.ca**, ou par téléphone, au numéro **1 800 811-1148**.

Canada

# CLASSIFIEDS

Marlene Katapatuk on Oct. 3 happy birthday to u and we love u so much also thanks for everything u have done to us again happy birthday with love always: Jason, Jaydon, Jaydrien, Lenny boy.

I would like to send birthday wishes to the following people Our God-Son Joshua Chemaganish who turns 3 this October 14th, Brianna Scott October 21, 3 yrs old already..time flies, and to the beautiful Amy Lee Chemaganish who turns sweet 16,Our nephews Stanley Nabinacaboo 7 yrs old and Joseph Sandy 8 yrs old on october 29th, Happy Birthday to all and Happy Hallowe'en. We miss you all and God Bless. Luv Joanne and Melanie Chemaganish and Gregory, Mark,and Annika Tooma in Montreal

Happy birthday to Elizabeth Natachequan George on October 4th it will be

our birtday let's go out and parttay....lol hope you enjoy your special day

and many more birthdays to come. from your Jiistow Patricia.M.Snowboy(Whap)

Wishing a happy 1st birthday to our baby boy ``Tommy, Madinwashkum, Philip, Kerlin Dixon'' on Oct. 18, 2006 in Ouje-Bougoumou. I thank God everyday for blessing us with our 3rd boy and being by our side during the time you came into this world again, happy, happy birthday baby with love always, Jennifer and Robert (Ojay)

Birthday greetings going out to our cousin Serena Bosum-Longshap on Oct. 17, 2006 (Ojay) and our cousin Cody Melleur (Chis) on Oct 14 2006. May you be blessed with many Happy Birthdays with love from Ethan-Robert, Richard & Tommy Dixon.

Sending birthday greetings to the October family in Chisasibi Alycia (Oct. 1) Pauline (Oct.2) Tristan (Oct. 3) Ben (Oct. 12) also, Happy 9th Anniversary on Oct. 10 with Love and Friendship, Jennifer, Robert and the Boys (Ojay).

Theresa Nelie Wapachee, Happy Birthday I'm glad you are apart of my life as your sister inlaw. I miss you and I love you, I hope I see you soon. Take care and enjoy your day, relaxe don't think to much. God is keeping you and watching you as I send this to you, Happy Birthday and many many more to come. Always Olivia C.

We would like to send birthday greetings to the most handsome set of twins in Kawawa, who were born a day apart, Both turn 14 yrs old, George Sandy Chemaganish on November 2, and to his twin John Troy Chemaganish on November 3rd, their mom Minnie Chemaganish also celebrates her birthday on November 7, Thomas Chemaganish on November 15, to our (Joanne and Melanaie) smart baby brother Matthew Chemaganish November 16 who turns 12 this year who is in Uashat and to my (Joanne) talented brother James Pien on November 29, he turns 23 this year. We love and miss you all and Happy Birthday and many more to come...Luv Joanne, Gregory, Mark, Annika and Melanie in Montreal.

Rebecca Matches.... I would like to wish a happy 4th birthday to my sweet adorable daugther Tia Angel Bearskin Matches on October 21. Your growing up so fast it seems like yesterday when you came into this world next year you`ll be in school just like your sisters. I love you my baby with all my heart you have brought so much joy & happiness into my life. I hope you have fun on your special day once again Happy 4th Birthday baby Love Always: your mom Rebecca Matches.

Belated birthday greetings going out to my friend Bianca Icebound whose birthday was on October 1, 2006. Happy 18th birthday buddy!!...lol, U wish eh? Anyway hope u had fun on your special day, and hope u didn't sing my favourite song without me being there. Call me when you plan to (sing) wouldn't miss it for the world. see you around and once again Happy Birthday!!! Renee

Take care and enjoy your day, relaxe don't think you d watching you as I send this to you, appy Birthday and many many more to come.

## CONGRATULATIONS – 104

To our Brother and Uncle !! Blake Bosum, we are so proud of you that you made the team in Quebec City. We love you so much. Since you were a child Blake, the first time dad put you on the Ice you were 3 years old, from then on you knew what you wanted to do, the ice was your calling, keep following your dreams the next time you play hockey it might be on the big screen on NHL. from Olivia, Mina Angel and Ethan Shecapio Bosum. YAY Blake!!

I would like to congratulate my brother, Bentley Mianscum for his efforts in raising awareness and funds for the "Breast Cancer Foundation". He raised over $1,000.00 towards the foundation and walked the 10 kms from Lac Cache to Chibougamau. Thank you Ben, for all you are doing. Can't wait to see what you will do next. Love ya, Sis, Margo.

Happy Anniversary to Blake Bosum and Theresa Wapachee, Sah you made it this far. I'm proud of you both your doing a good job at raising your beautiful family. Keep up the good work, I will keep you in my prayers. God is good he is the one holding you together because he is the one that united you both. Be thankful that you found each other. Congratulations on another year, Olivia C.

## PERSONAL - 300

Hello to all my family, Nephews and Nieces. I miss you all very much. I hope to see you all soon. Love you's. Sending you hugs and kisses. Daisy.

## Public Service Announcements – 400

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal now has a 1-800 number. You can now reach us toll-free at: 1-866-403-4688. Please check out the new website at: www.nwsm.info and feel free to give us any feedback.

Do you need help? Someone to talk to? Call the Kid's Help Phone's toll-free number, at: 1-800-668-6868 or check out their website at: www.kidshelp.sympatico.ca.

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Today, Wal-Mart buys from nearly 1,350 Québec suppliers, among them companies that were founded over 100 years ago as well as young, growing companies just a few years old.

In fact, in 2005, Wal-Mart injected over a billion and a half dollars into our economy, which translated into jobs and into growth for hundreds of our businesses here at home.

The Purchased in Québec Program, it's good for everyone.